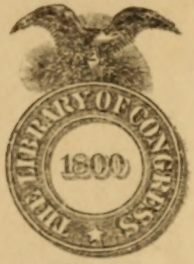

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Dante's Beatrice

MEMOIRS

OF THE

LOVES OF THE POETS.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

OF

WOMEN

CELEBRATED IN ANCIENT AND MODERN POETRY.

BY MRS. JAMESON,

AUTHORESS OF "THE DIARY OF AN ENNUYÉE," ETC.

Only she that hath as great a share in virtue as in beauty deserves a noble love to serve her, and a true poesie to speak her
HABINGTON'S CASTARA.

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Enfin, relevons-nous sous le poids de l'existence; ne donnons pas à nos injustes ennemis, à nos amis ingrats, le triomphe d'avoir abattu nos facultés intellectuelles. Ils reduisent à chercher la celèbrité ceux qui se seraient contentés des affections: eh bien! il faut l'atteindre. Ces essais ambitieux ne porteront point remède aux peines de l'âme; mais ils honoreront la vie. La consacrer à l'espoir toujours trompé du bonheur, c'est la rendre encore plus infortunée. Il vaut mieux réunir tous ses efforts pour descendre avec quelque noblesse, avec quelque réputation, la route qui conduit de la jeunesse à la mort.

MADAME DE STAEL.

THE AUTHOR TO THE READER.

These little sketches (they can pretend to no higher title) are submitted to the public with a feeling of timidity almost painful.

They are absolutely without any other pretension than that of exhibiting, in a small compass and under one point of view, many anecdotes of biography and criticism, and many beautiful poetical portraits, scattered through a variety of works, and all tending to illustrate a subject in itself full of interest,—the influence which the beauty and virtue of women have exercised over the characters and writings of men of genius. But little praise or reputation attends the mere compiler, but the pleasure of the task has compensated its difficulty; —"song, beauty, youth, love, virtue, joy," these "flowers of Paradise," whose growth is not of earth, were all around me; I had but to gather them from the intermingling weeds and briars, and to bind them into one sparkling wreath, consecrated to the glory of women and the gallantry of men.

The design which unfolded itself before me, as these little sketches extended gradually from a few memoranda into a volume, is not completed; much has been omitted, much suppressed. If I have paused mid-way in the task, it is not for want of

materials, which offer themselves in almost exhaustless profusion—nor from want of interest in the subject—the most delightful in which the imagination ever revelled! but because I desponded over my own power to do it justice. I know, I feel that it required more extensive knowledge of languages, more matured judgment, more critical power, more eloquence;—only Madame de Staël could have fulfilled my conception of the style in which it ought to have been treated. It was enthusiasm, not presumption, which induced me to attempt it. I have touched on matters, on which there are a variety of tastes and opinions, and lightly passed over questions on which there are volumes of grave "historic doubts;" but I have ventured on no discussion, still less on any decision. I have been satisfied merely to quote my authorities; and where these exhibited many opposing facts and opinions, it seemed to me that there was far more propriety and much less egotism in simply expressing, in the first person, what I thought and felt, than in asserting absolutely that a thing *is so*, or *is said to be so*. Every one has a right to have an opinion, and deliver it with modesty; but no one has a right to clothe such opinions in general assertions, and in terms which seem to insinuate that they are or ought to be universal. I know I am open to criticism and contradiction on a thousand points; but I have adhered strictly to what appeared to me the truth, and examined conscientiously all the sources of information that were open to me.

The history of this little book, were it worth revealing, would be the history, in miniature, of most human undertakings: it was begun with enthusiasm; it has been interrupted by intervals of illness, idleness, or more serious cares; it has been pursued through difficulties so great, that they would perhaps excuse its many deficiencies; and now I see its conclusion with a languor almost approaching to despair;—at least with a feeling which, while it renders me doubly sensitive to criticism, and apprehensive of failure, has rendered me almost indifferent to success, and careless of praise.

I owe four beautiful translations from the Italian, (which are noticed in their proper places,) to the kindness of a living poet, whose justly celebrated name, were I allowed to mention it, would be subject of pride to myself, and double the value of this little book. I have no other assistance of any kind to acknowledge.

* * * * *

Will it be thought unfeminine or obtrusive, if I add yet a few words?

I think it due to truth and to myself to seize this opportunity of saying, that a little book published some years ago, and now perhaps forgotten, was not written for publication, nor would ever have been printed, but for accidental circumstances.

That the title under which it appeared was not given by the writer, but the publisher, who at the time knew nothing of the author.

And that several false dates, and unimportant

circumstances and characters were interpolated, to conceal, if possible, the real purport and origin of the work. Thus the intention was not to create an illusion, by giving to fiction the appearance of truth, but, in fact, to give to truth the air of fiction. I was not *then* prepared for all that a woman must meet and endure, who once suffers herself to be betrayed into authorship. She may repent at leisure, like a condemned spirit; but she has passed that barrier from which there is no return.

C'est assez,—I will not add a word more, lest it should be said that I have only disclaimed the title of the *Ennuyée*, to assume that of the *Ennuyéuse*.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I. Page

A Poet's Love..... 15

CHAPTER II.

Loves of the Classic Poets..... 19

CHAPTER III.

The Loves of the Troubadours..... 24

CHAPTER IV.

The Loves of the Troubadours (continued)..... 37

CHAPTER V.

Guido Cavalcanti and Mandetta.—Cino da Pistoja and Selvaggia..... 52

CHAPTER VI.

Laura..... 59

CHAPTER VII.

Laura and Petrarch (continued)..... 74

CHAPTER VIII.

Dante and Beatrice Portinari..... 87

CHAPTER IX.

Dante and Beatrice (continued)..... 102

CHAPTER X. Page

Chaucer and Philippa Picard.—King James and Lady Jane Beaufort..... 107

CHAPTER XI.

Lorenzo de' Medici and Lucretia Donati..... 128

CHAPTER XII.

The Fair Geraldine..... 144

CHAPTER XIII.

Ariosto, Ginevra, and Alessandra Strozzi..... 154

CHAPTER XIV.

Spenser's Rosalind. Spenser's Elizabeth..... 169

CHAPTER XV.

On the Love of Shakspeare..... 182

CHAPTER XVI.

Sydney's Stella (Lady Rich)..... 190

CHAPTER XVII.

Court and Age of Elizabeth.

Drayton — Daniel — Drummond — Mary, Queen of Scots—Clement—Marot and Diana de Poictiers—Ronsard's Cassandre—Ronsard's Marie—Ronsard's Helene..... 200

CHAPTER XVIII.

Leonora d'Este..... 218

CHAPTER XIX.

Milton and Leonora Baroni..... 249

CHAPTER XX.

Carew's Celia.—Lucy Sacheverel..... 263

CHAPTER XXI.

Waller's Sacharissa..... 273

CHAPTER XXII. Page

Beauties and Poets in the Reign of Charles I..... 285

CHAPTER XXIII.

Conjugal Poetry.

Ovid and Perilla—Seneca's Paulina—Sulpicia—Clotilde de Surville..... 291

CHAPTER XXIV.

Conjugal Poetry (continued.)

Vittoria Colonna..... 303

CHAPTER XXV.

Conjugal Poetry (continued.)

Veronica Gambara—Camilla Valentini—Portia Rota—Castiglione..... 318

CHAPTER XXVI.

Conjugal Poetry (continued.)

Doctor Donne and his Wife..... 327

CHAPTER XXVII.

Conjugal Poetry (continued.)

Habington's Castara..... 338

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Conjugal Poetry (continued.)

The Two Zappi..... 353

CHAPTER XXIX.

Conjugal Poetry (continued.)

Lord Lyttelton—Prince Frederick—Doctor Parnell.. 358

CHAPTER XXX.

Conjugal Poetry (continued.)

Klopstock and Meta..... 369

CHAPTER XXXI.

Conjugal Poetry (continued.)

Bonnie Jean—Highland Mary—Loves of Burns..... 388

CHAPTER XXXII. Page

CONJUGAL POETRY (continued.)

Monti and his Wife..... 408

CHAPTER XXXIII.

POETS AND BEAUTIES FROM CHARLES II. TO QUEEN ANNE.

Cowley's Eleanora—Maria d'Este—Anne Killegrew—Lady Hyde—Duchess of Queensbury—Granville's Mira—Prior's Chloe—..... 414

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Swift, Stella and Vanessa..... 431

CHAPTER XXXV.

Pope and Martha Blount..... 455

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Pope and Lady M. W. Montagu..... 464

CHAPTER XXXVII.

POETICAL OLD BACHELORS.

Gray—Collins—Goldsmith—Shenstone—Thomson—Hammond..... 478

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FRENCH POETS.

Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet—Madame de Gouverné..... 484

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FRENCH POETRY (continued.)

Madame d'Houdetot..... 495

CONCLUSION.

Heroines of Modern Poetry..... 502

THE

LOVES OF THE POETS.

CHAPTER I.

A POET'S LOVE.

Io ti cinsi de gloria, e fatta ho dea!—GUIDI.

OF all the heaven-bestowed privileges of the poet, the highest, the dearest, the most enviable, is the power of immortalizing the object of his love; of dividing with her his amaranthine wreath of glory, and repaying the inspiration caught from her eyes with a crown of everlasting fame. It is not enough that in his imagination he has deified her—that he has consecrated his faculties to her honor—that he has burned his heart in incense upon the altar of her perfections; the divinity, thus decked out in richest and loveliest hues he places on high, and calls upon all ages and all nations to bow down before her, and all ages and all nations obey! worshipping the beauty thus enshrined in imperishable verse, when others, perhaps as fair, and not less worthy, have gone down unsung, "to dust and

an endless darkness." How many women, who would otherwise have stolen through the shade of domestic life, their charms, virtues, and affections buried with them, have become objects of eternal interest and admiration, because their memory is linked with the brightest monuments of human genius? While many a high-born dame, who once moved, goddess-like, upon the earth, and bestowed kingdoms with her hand, lives a mere name in some musty chronicle. Though her love was sought by princes, though with her dower she might have enriched an emperor,—what availed it?

"She had no poet—and she died!"

And how have women repaid this gift of immortality? O believe it, when the garland was such as woman is proud to wear, she amply and deeply rewarded him who placed it on her brow. If in return for being made illustrious, she made her lover happy,—if for glory she gave a heart, was it not a rich equivalent? and if not,—if the lover was unsuccessful, still the poet had his reward. Whence came the generous feelings, the high imaginations, the glorious fancies, the heavenward aspirations, which raised him above the herd of vulgar men —but from the ennobling influence of her he loved? Through *her*, the world opened upon him with a diviner beauty, and all nature became in his sight but a transcript of the charms of his mistress. He saw her eyes in the stars of heaven, her lips in the half-blown rose

The perfume of the opening flowers was but her breath, that "wafted sweetness round about the world:" the lily was "a sweet thief" that had stolen its purity from her breast. The violet was dipped in the azure of her veins; the aurorean dews, "dropt from the opening eyelids of the morn," were not so pure as her tears; the last rose-tint of the dying day was not so bright or so delicate as her cheek. Hers was the freshness and bloom of Spring; she consumed him to languor as the Summer sun; she was kind as the bounteous Autumn, or she froze him with her wintry disdain. There was nothing in the wonders, the splendors, or the treasures of the created universe,—in heaven or in earth,—in the seasons or their change, that did not borrow from her some charm, some glory beyond its own. Was it not just that the beauty she dispensed should be consecrated to her adornment, and that the inspiration she bestowed should be repaid to her in fame?

> For what of thee thy poet doth invent,
> He robs thee of, and pays it thee again.
> He lends thee virtue, and he stole that word
> From thy behaviour; beauty doth he give,
> But found it in thy cheek; he can afford
> No praise to thee but what in thee doth live.
> *Then thank him not for that which he doth say,*
> *Since what he owes thee, thou thyself dost pay!*
>
> SHAKSPEARE'S SONNETS.

The theory, then, which I wish to illustrate, as far as my limited powers permit, is this; that where

a woman has been exalted above the rest of her sex by the talents of a lover, and consigned to enduring fame and perpetuity of praise, the passion was real, and was merited ; that no deep or lasting interest was ever founded in fancy or in fiction ; that truth, in short, is the basis of all excellence in amatory poetry, as in every thing else ; for where truth is, there is good of some sort, and where there is truth and good, there must be beauty, there must be durability of fame. Truth is the golden chain which links the terrestrial with the celestial, which sets the seal of heaven on the things of this earth, and stamps them to immortality. Poets have risen up and been the mere fashion of a day, and have set up idols which have been the idols of a day: if the worship be out of date and the idols cast down, it is because these adorers wanted sincerity of purpose and feeling; their raptures were feigned ; their incense was bought or adulterate. In the brain or in the fancy, one beauty may eclipse another—one coquette may drive out another, and, tricked off in airy verse, they float away unregarded like morning vapors, which the beam of genius has tinged with a transient brightness ; but let the heart once be touched, and it is not only wakened but inspired ; the lover kindled into the poet, presents to her he loves his cup of ambrosial praise : she tastes—and the woman is transmuted into a divinity. When the Grecian sculptor carved out his deities in marble, and left us wondrous and godlike shapes, imper-

sonations of ideal grace unapproachable by modern skill, was it through mere mechanical superiority? No;—it was the spirit of faith within, which shadowed to his imagination what he would represent. In the same manner, no woman has ever been truly, lastingly deified in poetry, but in the spirit of truth and of love!

CHAPTER II.

LOVES OF THE CLASSIC POETS.

I AM not sufficiently an antiquarian or scholar to trace the muses "upward to their spring," neither is there occasion to seek out first examples of poetical loves in the days of fables and of demigods; or in those pastoral ages when shepherds were kings and poets: the loves of Orpheus and Eurydice are a little too shadowy, and those of the royal Solomon rather too mixed and too mystical for our purpose.—To descend then at once to the *classical* ages of antiquity.

It must be allowed, that as far as women are concerned, we have not much reason to regard them with reverence. The fragments of the amatory poetry of the Greeks, which have been preserved to our times, show too plainly in what light we were then regarded; and graceful and exquisite as

many of them are, they bear about them the taint of degraded morals and manners, and are utterly destitute of that exalted sentiment of respect and tenderness for woman, either individually or as a sex, which alone can give them value in our eyes.

I must leave it then to learned commentators to explore and elucidate the loves of Sappho and Anacreon. To us unlearned women they shine out through the long lapse of ages, bright *names*, and little else; a kind of half-real, half-ideal impersonations of love and song; the one enveloped in "a fair luminous cloud," the other "veiled in shadowing roses;" and thus veiled and thus shadowed, by all accounts, they had better remain.

The same remark, with the same reservation, applies to the Latin poets. They wrote beautiful verses, admirable for their harmony, elegance, and perspicuity of expression; and are studied as models of style in a language, the knowledge of which, as far as these poets are concerned, were best confined to the other sex. They lived in a corrupted age, and their pages are deeply stained with its licentiousness; they inspire no sympathy for their love, no interest, no respect for the objects of it. How, indeed, should that be possible, when their mistresses, even according to the lover's painting, were all either perfectly insipid, or utterly abandoned and odious? * Ovid, he who has revealed to mor-

* I need scarcely observe, that the following sketch of the lyrical poets of Rome is abridged from the analysis of their works, in Ginguene's Hist. Litteraire, vol. iii.

tal ears "all the soft scandal of the laughing sky," and whose gallantry has become proverbial, represents himself as so incensed by the public and shameless infidelities of his Corinna, that he treats her with the unmanly brutality of some street ruffian;—in plain language, he beats her. They are then reconciled, and again there are quarrels, coarse reproaches, and mutual blows. At length the lady, as might be expected from such tuition, becoming more and more abandoned, this delicate and poetical lover requests, as a last favor, that she will, for the future, take some trouble to deceive him more effectually; and the fair one, can she do less? kindly consents!

Cynthia, the mistress of Propertius, gets tipsy, overturns the supper table, and throws the cups at her lover's head; he is delighted with her *playfulness:* she leaves him, to follow the camp with a soldier; he weeps and laments: she returns to him again, and he is enchanted with her amiable condescension. Her excesses are such, that he is reduced to blush for her and for himself; and he confesses that he is become, for her sake, the laughing stock of all Rome. Cynthia is the only one of these classical loves who seems to have possessed any mental accomplishments. The poet praises, incidentally, her talents for music and poetry; but not as if they added to her charms or enhanced her value in his estimation. The Lesbia* of Catullus,

* Clodia, the wife of Quintus Metellus Celer.

whose eyes were red with weeping the loss of her favorite sparrow, crowned a life of the most flagitious excesses by poisoning her husband. Of the various ladies celebrated by Horace and Tibullus, it would really be difficult to discover which was most worthless, venal, and profligate. These were the refined loves of the classic poets.

* * * * *

The passion they celebrated never seems to have inspired one ennobling or generous sentiment, nor to have lifted them for one moment above the grossest selfishness. They had no scruple in exhibiting their mistresses to our eyes, as doubtless they appeared in their own, degraded by every vice, and in every sense contemptible; beings, not only beyond the pale of our sympathy, but of our toleration. Throughout their works, virtue appears a mere jest: Love stripped of his divinity, even by those who first deified him, is what we disdain to call by that name; *sentiment*, as we now understand the word,—that is, the union of fervent love with reverence and delicacy towards its object,—a thing unknown and unheard of,—and all is "of the earth, earthy."

* * * * *

It is for women I write; the fair, pure-hearted, delicate-minded, and unclassical reader will recollect that I do not presume to speak of these poets critically, being neither critic nor scholar; but merely with a reference to my subject, and with a reference to my sex. As monuments of the lan-

guage and literature of a great and polished people, rich with a thousand beauties of thought and of style, doubtless they have their value and their merit; but as monuments also of a state of morals inconceivably gross and corrupt; of the condition of women degraded by their own vices, the vices and tyranny of the other sex, and the prevalence of the Epicurean philosophy, the tendency of which, (however disguised by rhetoric,) was ever to lower the tone of the mind; considered in this point of view, they might as well have all burned together in that vast bonfire of love-poetry which the Doctors of the Church raised at Constantinople:—what a flame it must have made! *

* "J'ai ouï dire dans mon enfance à Demetrius Chalcondyle, homme très instruit de tout ce qui regarde la Grèce, qui les Prêtres avaient eu assez d'influence sur les Empereurs de Constantinople, pour les engager à brûler les ouvrages de pleusieurs anciens poëtes Grecs, et en particulier de ceux qui parlaient des amours, &c. * * * Ces prêtres, sans doute, montrèrent une malveillance honteuse envers les anciens poëtes; mais ils donnerent une grande preuve d'integrité, de probité, et de religion."

ALCYONIUS.

This sentiment is put into the mouth of Leo X. at a time when the mania of classical learning was at its height.—See Roscoe, (Leo X.,) and Ginguené.

CHAPTER III.

THE LOVES OF THE TROUBADOURS.

Gente, che d'amor givan ragionando.—PETRARCA.

THE irruptions of the northern nations, among whom our sex was far better appreciated than among the polished Greeks and Romans; the rise of Christianity, and the institution of chivalry, by changing the moral condition of women, gave also a totally different character to the homage addressed to them. It was in the ages called gothic and barbarous,—in that era of high feelings and fierce passions,—of love, war, and wild adventure, that the sex began to take their true station in society. From the midst of ignorance, superstition, and ferocity, sprung up that enthusiasm, that exaggeration of sentiment, that serious, passionate, and imaginative adoration of women, which has since, indeed, degenerated into mere gallantry, but was the very fountain of all that is most elevated and elegant in modern poetry, and most graceful and refined in modern manners.

The amatory poetry of Provence had the same source with the national poetry of Spain; both were derived from the Arabians. To them we trace not only the use of rhyme, and the various forms of stanzas employed by the early lyric poets,

but by a strange revolution, it was from the East, where women are now held in seclusion, as mere soulless slaves of the passions and caprices of their masters, that the sentimental devotion paid to our sex in the chivalrous ages was derived.* The poetry of the Troubadours kept alive and enhanced the tone of feeling on which it was founded; it was cause and effect reacting on each other; and though their songs exist only in the collections of the antiquarian, and the very language in which they wrote has passed away, and may be accounted *dead*,—so is not the spirit they left behind: as the founders of a new school of amatory poetry, we are under obligations to their memory, which throw a strong interest around their personal adventures, and the women they celebrated.

The tenderness of feeling and delicacy of expression in some of these old Provençal poets, are the more touching, when we recollect that the writers were sometimes kings and princes, and often knights and warriors, famed for their hardihood and exploits. William, Count of Poitou, our Richard the First, two Kings of Arragon, a King of Sicily, the Dauphin of Auvergne, the Count de Foix, and a Prince of Orange, were professors of the "gaye science." Thibault,† Count of Prov-

* Sismondi—Littérature du Midi.

† Thibault fût Roi galant et valoureux,
Ses hâuts faits et son rangn'ont rien fait pour sa gloire;
Mais il fût chansonnier—et ses couplets heureux.
Nous ont conservé sa mémoire.—ANTH. DE MONET.

ence and King of Navarre, was another of these royal and chivalrous Troubadours, and his *lais* and his virelais were generally devoted to the praises of Blanche of Castile, the mother of Louis the Ninth—the same Blanche whom Shakspeare has introduced into King John, and decked out in panegyric far transcending all that her favored poet and lover could have offered at her feet.* Thibault did, however, surpass all his contemporaries in refinement of style: he usually concludes his *chansons* with an *envoi*, or address, to the Virgin, worded with such equivocal ingenuity, that it is equally applicable to the Queen of Heaven, or to the queen of his earthly thoughts,—"La Blanche couronnée." There is much simplicity and elegance in the following little song, in which the French has been modernized.

Las! si j'avais pouvoir d'oublier
Sa beauté,—son bien dire,
Et son très doux regarder
Finirait mon martyre!

Mais las! mon cœur je n'en puis ôter;
Et grand affolage
M'est d'espérer
Mais tel servage
Donne courage
A tout endurer.

* If lusty Love should go in quest of beauty,
Where should he find it fairer than in Blanche?
If zealous Love should go in search of virtue,
Where should he find it purer than in Blanche?
If Love, ambitious, sought a match of birth,
Whose veins bound richer blood than Lady Blanche?

Et puis comment oublier
Sa beauté, son bien dire,
Et son très doux regarder?
Mieux aime mon martyre?"

Princesses and ladies of rank entered the lists of poesy, and vanquished, on almost every occasion, the Troubadours of the other sex. For instance, that Countess of Champagne, who presided with such éclat in one of the courts of love; Beatrice, Countess of Provence, the mother of four queens, among whom was Berengaria of England; Clara d'Anduse, one of whose songs is translated by Sismondi; a certain Dame Castellosa, who in a pathetic remonstrance to some ungrateful lover, assures him that if he forsakes her for another, and leaves her to die, he will commit a heinous sin before the face of God and man; that charming Comtesse de Die, of whom more presently, and others innumerable, "tout hommes que femmes, la pluspart gentilshommes et Seigneurs de Places, amoreux des Roynes, Imperatrices, Duchesses, Marquises, Comtesses, et gentils-femmes; desquelles les maris s'estimaient grandement heureux quand nos poëtes leurs addressaient quelque chant nouveau et notre langue Provençal." The said poets being rewarded by these debonnaire husbands with rich dresses, horses, armor, and gold:* and by the ladies with praise, thanks, courteous words, and

* La plus honourable recompence qu'on pouvait faire aux dits poëtes, était qu'on leur fournissait de draps, chevaux, armure, et argent.

sweet smiles, and very often, " altra cosa più cara." The biography of these Troubadours generally commences with the same phrase—Such a one was " gentilhomme et chevalier," and was " pris d'amour " for such a lady, always named, who was the wife of such a lord, and in whose honor and praise he composed " maintes belles et doctes chansons." In these " chansons,"—for all the amatory poetry of those times was sung to music,—we have love and romantic adventure oddly enough mixed up with piety and devotion, such as were the mode in an age when religion ruled the imagination and the opinions of men, without in any degree restraining the passions or influencing the conduct. One Troubadour tells us, that when he beholds the face of his mistress, he crosses himself with delight and gratitude; another pathetically entreats a priest to dispense him from his vows of love to a certain lady, whom he loved no longer; the lady being the wife of another, one would imagine that the dispensation should rather have been required in the first instance. Arnaldo de Daniel, unable to soften the obdurate heart of his mistress, performs penance, and celebrates six (or as some say, a thousand) masses a day, " en priant Dieu de pouvoir acquerier la grace de sa dame," and burns lamps before the Virgin, and consecrates tapers for the same purpose: the lady with whom he was thus piously in love, was Cyberna, the wife of Guillaume de Bouille. This was something like the incantations and sacrifices of the classic poets,

who familiarly mixed up their mythology with their amours; but in a spirit as different as the allegorical cupid of these chivalrous poets is from the winged and wanton deity of the Greeks and Romans. Pierre Vidal sees a vision of Love, whom he describes as a young knight, fair and fresh as the day, crowned with a wreath of flowers instead of a helmet; and mounted on a palfrey as white as snow, with a saddle of jasper, and spurs of chalcedony; his squires and attendants are *Mercy*, *Pudeur*, and *Loyauté*. *Sir Cupid* on horseback, with his saddle and his spurs, attended by Gentleness, Modesty, and Good Faith, is a novel divinity. —Thus, among the Greeks, Love was attended by the Graces, and among the Troubadours by the Virtues. In the same spirit of allegory, but touched with a more classic elegance, we have Petrarch's Cupid, driving his fiery car in triumph, followed by a shadowy host of captives to his power,—the heroes who had confessed and the poets who had sung his might.

> Vidi un vittorioso e sommo duce,
> Pur com' un di color ch' in Campidoglio
> Trionfal carro a gran gloria conduce.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Quattro destrier via più che neve bianchi:
> Sopr' un carro di foco un garzon crudo
> Con arco in mano, e con säette a' fianchi.

And yet more finished is Spenser's "Masque of Cupid," in the third book of the Fairy Queen,

where Love, as in the antique gem, is mounted on a lion, preceded by minstrels, carolling

A lay of love's delight with sweet concent,

attended by Fancy, Desire, Hope, Fear, and Doubt; and followed by Care, Repentance, Shame, Strife, Sorrow, &c.—The vivid colors in which these imaginary personages are depicted, the image of the god "uprearing himself," and looking round with disdain upon the troop of victims and slaves who surround him, the rattling of his darts, as he shakes them in defiance and in triumph, and "claps on high his colored wings twain," forms altogether a most finished and gorgeous picture; such as Rubens should have painted, as far as his pencil, rainbow dipt, could have reflected the animated pageant to the eye.

The extravagance of passion and boundless devotion to the fair sex, which the Troubadours sang in their lays, they not unfrequently illustrated by their actions; and while the knowledge of the first is confined to a few antiquarians, the latter still survive in the history and the traditions of their province. One of these (Guillaume de la Tour) having lost the object of his love, underwent, during a whole year, the most cruel and unheard-of penances, in the hope that Heaven might be won to perform a miracle in his favor, and restore her to his arms; at length he died broken-hearted on her tomb.* Another,† beloved by a

* Millot, vol. ii. p. 148. † Richard de Barbesieu.

certain princess, in some unfortunate moment breaks his vow of fidelity, and unable to appease the indignation of his mistress, he retires to a forest, builds himself a cabin of boughs, and turns hermit, having first made a solemn vow that he will never leave his solitude till he is received into favor by his offended love. Being one of the most celebrated and popular Troubadours of his province, all the knights and the ladies sympathize with his misfortunes: they find themselves terribly *ennuyes* in the absence of the poet who was accustomed to vaunt their charms and their deeds of prowess; and at the end of two years they send a deputation, entreating him to return,—but in vain: they then address themselves to the lady, and humbly solicit the pardon of the offender, whose disgrace in her sight has thrown a whole province into mourning. The princess at length relents, but upon conditions which appear in these unromantic times equally extraordinary and difficult to fulfil. She requires that a hundred brave knights, and a hundred fair dames, pledged in love to each other, (s'aimant d'amour) should appear before her on their knees, and with joined hands supplicate for mercy: the conditions are fulfilled: the hundred pair of lovers are found to go through the ceremony, and the Troubadour receives his pardon.*

The story of Peyre de Ruer, "gentilhomme et Trobadour," might be termed a satirical romance, did we not know that it is a plain fact, related with

* Millot, vol. iii. p. 86.—Guinguenè, vol. i. p. 280.

perfect simplicity. He devotes himself to a lady of the noble Italian family of Carraccioli, and in her praise he composes, as usual, "maintes belles et doctes chansons:"—but the lady seems to have had a taste for magnificence and pleasure; and the poet, in order to find favor in her eyes, expends his patrimony in rich apparel, banquets, and *joustes* in her honor. The lady, however, continues inexorable; and Peyre de Ruer takes the habit of a pilgrim and wanders about the country. He arrives in the holy week at a certain church, and desires of the curé permission to preach to his congregation of penitents:—he ascends the pulpit, and recites with infinite fervor and grace one of his own chansons d'amour,—for, says the chronicle, "*autre chose ne sçavait*," "he knew nothing better." The people, mistaking it for an invocation to the Virgin Mary or the Saints, are deeply affected and edified; eyes are seen to weep that never wept before; the most impenitent hearts are suddenly softened: he concludes with an exhortation in the same strain—and then descending from the pulpit, places himself at the door, and holding out his hat for the customary alms, his delighted congregation fill it to overflowing with pieces of silver. Peyer de Ruer forthwith casts off his pilgrim's gown, and in a new and splendid dress, and with a new song in his hand, he presents himself before the lady of his love, who, charmed by his gay attire not less than by his return, receives him most graciously, and bestows on him "maintes caresses."

I must observe that the biographer of this Peyer de Ruer, himself a churchman, does not appear in the least scandalized or surprised at this very novel mode of recruiting his finances and obtaining the favor of the lady; but gives us fairly to understand, that after such a proof of *layauté*, he should have thought it quite contrary to all rule if she had still rejected the addresses of this *gentil Troubadour*.

Jauffred (or Geffrey) de Rudel is yet more famous, and his story will strikingly illustrate the manners of those times. Rudel was the favorite minstrel of Geffrey de Platagenet Bretagne, the elder brother of our Richard Cœur de Lion, and like the Royal Richard, a patron of music and poetry. During the residence of Rudel at the court of England, where he resided in great honor and splendor, caressed for his talents, and loved for the gentleness of his manners, he heard continually the praises of a certain Countess of Tripoli, famed throughout Europe for her munificent hospitality to the poor Crusaders. The pilgrims and soldiers of the Cross, who were returning way-worn, sick, and disabled, from the burning plains of Asia, were relieved and entertained by this devout and benevolent Countess; and they repaid her generosity, with all the enthusiasm of gratitude, by spreading her fame throughout Christendom.

These reports of her beauty and her beneficence, constantly repeated, fired the susceptible fancy of Rudel: without having seen her, he fell passion-

ately in love with her, and unable to bear any longer the torments of absence, he undertook a pilgrimage to visit this unknown lady of his love, in company with Bertrand d'Allamanon, another celebrated Troubadour of those days. He quitted the English court in spite of the entreaties and expostulations of Prince Geffrey Platagenet, and sailed for the Levant. But so it chanced, that falling grievously sick on the voyage, he lived only till his vessel reached the shores of Tripoli. The Countess being told that a celebrated poet had just arrived in her harbour, who was dying for her love, immediately hastened on board, and taking his hand, entreated him to live for her sake. Rudel, already speechless, and almost in the agonies of death, revived for a moment at this unexpected grace; he was just able to express, by a last effort, the excess of his gratitude and love, and expired in her arms: thereupon the Countess wept bitterly, and vowed herself to a life of penance for the loss she had caused to the world.* She

* "Depuis ne fut jamais veue faire bonne chère," says the old chronicle.—I am tempted to add the description of the first and last interview of the Countess and her lover in the exquisite old French, of which the antique simplicity and naïveté are untranslatable.

"En cet estat fut conduit au port de Trypolly, et là arrivé, son compagnon feist (*fit*) entendre à la Comtesse la venue de Pelerin malade. La Comtesse estant venue en la nef, prit le poëte par la main; et lui, sachant que c'estait la Comtesse, incontinent après le doult et graciex accueil, recouvra ses esprits, la remercia de ce qu'elle lui avait recouvré la vie, et lui dict: 'Très illustre et vertueuse princesse, je ne plaindrai point la mort oresque'—et ne

commanded that the last song which Rudel had composed in her honor, should be transcribed in letters of gold, and carried it always in her bosom; and his remains were enclosed in a magnificent mausoleum of porphyry, with an Arabic inscription, commemorating his genius and his love for her.

It is in allusion to this well-known story, that Petrarch has introduced Rudel into Trionfo d' Amore.

> Gianfré Rudel ch' uso la vela e 'l remo,
> A cercar la suo morte.

The song which the minstrel composed when he fell sick on this romantic expedition, and found his strength begin to fail, and which the Countess wore, folded within her vest, to the end of her life, is extant, and has been translated into most of the languages of Europe; of these translations Sismondi's is the best, preserving the original and curious arrangement of the rhymes, as well as the piety, naïveté, and tenderness of the sentiment.

> Irrité dolent partirai
> Si ne vois cet amour de loin,
> Et ne sais quand je le verrai
> Car sont par trop nos terres loin.
> Dieu, qui toutes choses as fait
> Et formas cet amour si loin,
> Donne force à mon cœur, car ai

pouvant achever son propos, sa maladie s'aigrissant et augmentant, rendit l'esprit entre les mains de la Comtesse.— *Vies des plus célèbres Poëtes Provençaux*, p. 24.

L'espoir de voir m'amour au loin.
Ah, Seigneur, tenez pour bien vrai
L'amour qu'ai pour elle de loin.
Car pour un bien que j'en aurai
J'ai mille maux, tant je suis loin.
Ja d'autr'amour ne jouirai
Sinon de cet amour de loin—
Qu'une plus belle je n'en sçais
En lieu qui soit ni près ni loin!

Mrs. Piozzi and others have paraphrased this little song, but in a spirit so different from the antique simplicity of the original, that I shall venture to give a version, which has at least the merit of being as faithful as the different idioms of the languages will allow; I am afraid, however, that it will not appear worthy of the honor which the Countess conferred on it.

" Grieved and troubled shall I die,
If I meet not my love afar;
Alas! I know not that I e'er
Shall see her—for she dwells afar.
O God! that didst all things create,
And formed my sweet love now afar;
Strengthen my heart, that I may hope
To behold her face who is afar.
O Lord! believe how very true
Is my love for her, alas! afar,
Tho' for each joy a thousand pains
I bear, because I am so far.

Bertrand d'Allamanon, whom I have mentioned as the companion of Rudel on his romantic expedition, has left us a little ballad, remarkable for the

extreme refinement of the sentiment, which is quite à la Petrarque: he gives it the fantastic title of a *demi chanson*, for a very fantastical reason: it is thus translated in Millot, (vol. i. p. 390.)

> Another love I'll never have,
> Save only she who is afar,
> For fairer one I never knew
> In places near, nor yet afar."

"On veut savoir pourquoi je fais une *demi chanson?* c'est parceque je n'ai qu'un demi sujet de chanter. Il n'y a d'amour que de ma part; la dame que j'aime ne veut pas m'aimer! mais au défaut des *oui* qu'elle me refuse, je prendrai les *non* qu'elle me prodigue:—*espérer auprès d'elle vaut mieux que jouir avec tout autre!*"

This is exactly the sentiment of Petrarch:

> Pur mi consola, che morir per lei
> Meglio è che gioir d'altra—

But it is one of those thoughts which spring in the heart, and might often be repeated without once being borrowed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOVES OF THE TROUBADOURS.

CONTINUED.

In striking contrast to the tender and gentle Rudel, we have the ferocious Bertrand de Born:

he, too, was one of the most celebrated Troubadours of his time. As a petty feudal sovereign, he was, partly by the events of the age, more by his own fierce and headlong passions, plunged in continual wars. Nature, however, had made him a poet of the first order. In these days he would have been another Lord Byron; but he lived in a terrible and convulsed state of society, and it was only in the intervals snatched from his usual pursuits,—that is, from burning the castles, and ravaging the lands of his neighbours, and stirring up rebellion, discord, and bloodshed all around him,—that he composed a vast number of *lays*, *serventes*, and *chansons;* some breathing the most martial, and even merciless spirit; others devoted to the praise and honor of his love, or rather loves, as full of submissive tenderness and chivalrous gallantry.

He first celebrated Elinor Plantagenet, the sister of his friend and brother in arms and song, Richard Cœur de Lion; and we are expressly told that Richard was proud of the poetical homage rendered to the charms of his sister by this knightly Troubadour, and that the Princess was far from being insensible to his admiration. Only one of the many songs addressed to Elinor has been preserved; from which we gather, that it was composed by Bertrand in the field, at a time when his army was threatened with famine, and the poet himself was suffering from the pangs of hunger. Elinor married the Duke of Saxony, and Bertrand chose for his next love the beautiful Maenz de

Montagnac, daughter of the Viscount of Turenne and wife of Talleyrand de Perigord. The lady accepted his service, and acknowledged him as her Knight; but evil tongues having attempted to sow dissension between the lovers, Bertrand addressed to her a song, in which he defends himself from the imputation of inconstancy, in a style altogether characteristic and original. The warrior poet, borrowing from the objects of his daily cares, ambition and pleasure, phrases to illustrate and enhance the expression of his love, wishes "that he may lose his favorite hawk in her first flight; that a falcon may stoop and bear her off, as she sits upon his wrist, and tear her in his sight, if the sound of his lady's voice be not dearer to him than all the gifts of love from another."—"That he may stumble with his shield about his neck; that his helmet may gall his brow; that his bridle may be too long, his stirrups too short; that he may be forced to ride a hard-trotting horse, and find his groom drunk when he arrives at his gate, if there be a word of truth in the accusations of his enemies: —that he may not have a *denier* to stake at the gaming-table, and that the dice may never more be favorable to him, if ever he had swerved from his faith:—that he may look on like a dastard, and see his lady wooed and won by another;—that the winds may fail him at sea;—that in the battle he may be the first to fly, if he who has slandered him does not lie in his throat," &c., and so on through seven or eight stanzas.

Bertrand de Born exercised in his time a fatal influence on the counsels and politics of England. A close and ardent friendship existed between him and young Henry Plantagenet, the eldest son of our Henry the Second; and the family dissensions which distracted the English Court, and the unnatural rebellion of Henry and Richard against their father, were his work. It happened some time after the death of Prince Henry, that the King of England besieged Bertrand de Born in one of his castles: the resistance was long and obstinate, but at length the warlike Troubadour was taken prisoner and brought before the King, so justly incensed against him, and from whom he had certainly no mercy to expect. The heart of Henry was still bleeding with the wounds inflicted by his ungrateful children, and he saw before him, and in his power, the primary cause of their misdeeds and his own bitter sufferings. Bertrand was on the point of being led out to death, when by a single word he reminded the King of his lost son, and the tender friendship which had existed between them.* The chord was struck which never ceased to vibrate in the parental heart of Henry; bursting into tears, he turned aside, and commanded Bertrand and his followers to be immediately set at liberty; he even restored to Bertrand his castle and his lands, "*in the name of his dead son.*" It is such traits as these, occurring at every page, which

* Le Roi lui demande, "S'il a perdu raison?" il lui répond. "Helas, oui! c'est depuis lamort du Prince Henri, votre fils!"

lend to the chronicles of this stormy period an interest overpowering the horror they would otherwise excite: for then all the best, as well as the worst of human passions were called into play. In this tempestuous commingling of all the jarring elements of society, we have those strange approximations of the most opposite sentiments,—implacable revenge and sublime forgiveness;—gross licentiousness and delicate tenderness;—barbarism and refinement;—treachery and fidelity—which remind one of that heterogeneous mass tossed up by a stormy ocean; heaps of pearls, unvalued gems, wedges of gold, mingled with dead men's bones, and all the slimy, loathsome, and monotonous production of the deep, which during a calm remain together concealed and unknown in its unfathomed abysses.

To return from this long similitude of Bertrand de Born: he concluded his stormy career in a manner very characteristic of the times; for he turned monk, and died in the odor of sanctity. But neither his late devotion, nor his warlike heroism, nor his poetic fame, could rescue him from the severe justice of Dante, who has visited his crimes and his violence with so terrible a judgment, that we forget, while we thrill with horror, that the crimes were real, the penance only imaginary. Dante, in one of the circles of the Inferno, meets Bertrand de Born carrying his severed head, *lantern wise*, in his hand;—the phantom lifts it up by the hair, and the ghastly lips unclose to confess the

cause and the justice of this horrible and unheard of penance.

———Or vedi la pena molesta
Tu che spirando vai veggendo i morti;
Vedi s'alcuna è grande come questa.
E perchè tu di me novella porti,
Sappi ch' i' son Bertram dal Bornio, quelli
Che diedi al Re giovane i ma' conforti.
I' feci 'l padre e 'l figlio in se ribelli:
* * * *
Perch'io partii così giunte persone,
Partito porto il mio cerebro, lasso!
Dal suo principio ch 'è 'n questo troncone.
Così s'osserva in me lo contrappasso.*

Now behold
This grievous torment, thou, who breathing goest
To spy the dead: behold, if any else
Be terrible as this,—and that on earth
Thou may'st bear tidings of me, know that I
Am Bertrand, he of Born, who gave King John
The counsel mischievous. Father and son
I set at mutual war:——
Spurring them on maliciously to strife.
For parting those so closely knit, my brain
Parted, alas! I carry from its source
That in this trunk inhabits. Thus the law
Of retribution fiercely works in me.†

Pierre Vidal, whose description of love I have quoted before, was one of the most extraordinary

* Inferno, c. xxviii.

† Carey's translation of Dante. Mr. Carey reads Re Giovanna, instead of Re giovane:—King John, instead of Prince Henry.

characters of his time, a kind of poetical Don Quixotte:—his brain was turned with love, poetry, and vanity: he believed himself the beloved of all the fair, the mirror of knighthood, and the prince of Troubadours. Yet in the midst of all his extravagances, he possessed exquisite skill in his art, and was not surpassed by any of the poets of those days, for the harmony, delicacy, and tenderness of his amatory effusions. He chose for his first love the beautiful wife of the Viscomte de Marseilles: the lady, unlike some of the Princesses of her time, distinguished between the poet and the man, and as he presumed too far on the encouragement bestowed on him in the former capacity, he was banished: he then followed Richard the First to the crusade. The verses he addressed to the lady from the Island of Cyprus are still preserved. The folly of Vidal, or rather the derangement of his imagination, subjected him to some of those mystifications which remind us of Don Quixotte and Sancho, in the court of the laughter-loving Duchess. For instance, Richard and his followers amused themselves at Cyprus, by marrying Vidal to a beautiful Greek girl of no immaculate reputation, whom they introduced to him as the niece of the Greek Emperor. Vidal, in right of his wife, immediately took the title of Emperor, assumed the purple, ordered a throne to be carried before him, and played the most fantastic antics of authority. Nor was this the greatest of his extravagances: on his return to Provence, he chose for the second object

of his amorous and poetical devotion, a lady whose name happened to be Louve de Penautier: in her honor he assumed the name of *Loup*, and farther to merit the good graces of his "*Dame*," and to do honor to the name he had adopted, he dressed himself in the hide of a wolf, and caused himself to be hunted in good earnest by a pack of dogs: he was brought back exhausted and half dead to the feet of his mistress, who appears to have been more moved to merriment than to love by this new and ridiculous exploit.

In general, however, the Troubadours had seldom reason to complain of the cruelty of the ladies to whom they devoted their service and their songs. The most virtuous and illustrious women thought themselves justified in repaying, with smiles and favors, the poetical adoration of their lovers; and this lasted until the profession of Troubadour was dishonored by the indiscretions, follies, and vices of those who assumed it. Thus Peyrols, a famous Provençal poet, who was distinguished in the court of the Dauphin d'Auvergne, fell passionately in love with the sister of that Prince, (the Baronne de Mercœur,) and the Dauphin, (himself a Troubadour) proud of the genius of his minstrel and of the poetical devotion paid to his sister, desired her to bestow on her lover all the encouragement and favor which was consistent with her dignity. The lady, however, either misunderstood her instructions, or found it too difficult to obey them: the seducing talents and tender verses of

this *gentil Troubadour* prevailed over her dignity: —Peyrols was beloved; but he was not sufficiently discreet. The sudden change in the tone and style of his songs betrayed him, and he was banished. A great number of his verses, celebrating the Dame de Mercœur, are preserved by St. Palaye, and translated by Millot.

Bernard de Ventradour was beloved by Elinor de Guienne, afterwards the wife of our Henry the Second, and the mother of Richard the First:—I have before observed the poetical penchants of all Elinor's children, which they seem to have inherited from their mother.

Sordello of Mantua, whose name is familiar to all the readers of Dante, as occurring in one of the finest passages of this great poem,* was an Italian, but like all the best poets of his day, wrote in the Provençal tongue: he is said to have carried off the sister of that modern Phalaris, the tyrant Ezzelino of Padua. There is a very elegant ballad (ballata) by Sordello, translated in Millot's collection; it is properly a kind of rondeau, the first line being repeated at the end of every stanza; "Helas! à quoi me servent mes yeux?"—"Alas! wherefore have I eyes?"—It describes the pleasures of the Spring, which are to him as nothing, in the absence of the only object on which his eyes can dwell with delight. The arrangement of the rhymes in this pastoral song is singularly elegant and musical.

* Purgatorio, c. vi.

Lastly, as illustrating the history of the amatory poetry of this age, I extract from Nostradamus* the story of the young Countess de Die; she loved and was beloved by the Chevalier d'Adhèmar: (ancestor I presume to that Chevalier d'Adhèmar who figures in the letters of Madame de Sevigné.) It was not in this case the lover who celebrated the charms of his mistress, but the lady, who, being an illustrious female Troubadour, "docte en poësie," celebrated the exploits and magnanimity of her lover. The Chevalier, proud of such a distinction, caused the verses of his mistress to be beautifully copied, and always carried them in his bosom; and whenever he was in the company of knights and ladies, he enchanted them by singing a couplet in his own praise out of his lady's book. The publicity thus given to their love, was quite in the spirit of the times, and does not appear to have injured the reputation of the Countess for immaculate virtue,† which Adhèmar would probably have defended with lance and spear, against any slanderous tongue which had dared to defame her.

The conclusion of this romantic story is melan-

* Vies des plus célèbres poëtes Provençaux.

† Agnes de Navarre Comtesse de Foix, was beloved by Guillaume de Machaut, a French poet; he became jealous, and she sent her own confessor to him to complain of the injustice of his suspicions, and to swear that she was still faithful to him. She required, also, of her lover, to write and to publish in verse the history of their love; and she preserved, at the same time, in the eyes of her husband and of the world, the character of a virtuous Princess —*See Foscolo—Essays on Petrarch.*

choly. Adhèmar heard a false report, that the Countess, whose purity and constancy he had so proudly maintained, had cast away her smiles on a rival: he fell sick with grief and bitterness of heart: the Countess, being informed of his state, set out, accompanied by her *mother*, and a long train of knights and ladies, to visit and comfort him with assurances of her fidelity; but when she appeared at his bedside and drew the curtain, it was already too late: Adhèmar expired in her arms. The Countess took the veil in the convent of St. Honoré, and died the same year *of grief*, says the chronicle;—and to conclude the tragedy characteristically, the mother of the young Countess buried her in the same grave with her lover, and raised a superb monument to the memory of both. The Countess de Die was one of the ten ladies who formed the *Court of Love*, held at Pierrefeu, (about 1194,) and in which Estifanie de Baux presided.

These Courts of Love, and the scenes they gave rise to, were certainly open to ridicule; the "belles et subtiles questions d'amour" which were there solemnly discussed, and decided by ladies of rank, were often absurd, and the decisions something worse: still, the fanciful influence they gave to women on these subjects, and the gallantry they introduced into the intercourse between the sexes, had a tendency to soften the manners, to refine the language, and to tinge the sentiments and passions with a kind of philosophical mysticism. But

these gay and gallant Courts of Love, the Provençal Troubadours, their lays, which for two centuries had been the delight of all ranks of people, and had spread music, love, and poetry through the land;—their language, which had been the chosen dialect of gallantry, in every court in Europe,—were at once swept from the earth.

The glory of the Provençal literature began when Provence was raised to an independent Fief, under Count Berenger I. about the year 1100; it lasted two entire centuries, and ended when that fine and fertile country became the scene of the horrible crusade against the Albigenses; when the Inquisition sent forth its exterminating fiends to scatter horror and devastation through the land, and the wars and rapacity of Charles of Anjou, its new possessor, almost depopulated the country. The language which had once celebrated deeds of love and heroism, now sang only of desolation and despair. The Troubadours, in a strain worthy of their gentle and noble calling, generally advocated the part of the Albigenses, and the oppressed of whatever faith; and in many provinces, in Lombardy especially, their language was interdicted, lest it might introduce heretical or rebellious principles; gradually it fell into disuse, and at length into total oblivion. The Troubadours, no longer welcomed in castle or in hall, where once

> They poured to lords and ladies gay,
> The unpremeditated lay,

were degraded to wandering minstrels and itinerant jugglers. An attempt was made, about a century later, (1324) by the institution of the Floral Games at Thoulouse, to keep alive this high strain of poetical gallantry. They were formerly celebrated with great splendor, and a shadow of this institution is, I believe, still kept up, but it has degenerated into a mere school of affectation. The original race of the Troubadours was extinct long before Clemence d'Isaure and her golden violet were thought of.

I cannot quit the subject of the Troubadours without one or two concluding observations. To these rude bards we owe some new notions of poetical justice, which never seem to have occurred to Horace or Longinus, and are certainly more magnanimous, as well as more true to moral feeling, than those which prevailed among the polished Greeks and Romans. For instance, the generous Hector and the constant Troilus are invariably exalted above the subtle Ulysses and the savage Achilles. Theseus, Jason, and Æneas, instead of being represented as classical heroes and pious favorites of the gods, are denounced as recreant knights and false traitors to love and beauty. In the estimation of these chivalrous bards, a woman's tears outweighed the exploits of demi-gods; all the glory of Theseus is forgotten in sympathy for Ariadne; and Æneas, in the old ballads and romances, is not, after all his perfidy, dismissed to happiness and victory, but is plagued by the fiends,

haunted by poor Dido's "grimly ghost," and, finally, doomed to perish miserably.* Nor does Jason fare better at their hands; in all the old poets he is consigned to just execration. In Dante, we have a magnificent and a terrible picture of him, doomed to one of the lowest circles of hell, amid a herd of vile seducers, who betrayed the trusting faith, or bartered the charms of women. Demons scourge him up and down, without mercy or respite, in vengeance for the wrongs of Hypsipyle and Medea.

Guarda quel grande che viene
E per dolor, non par lagrima spanda;
Quanto aspetto reale ancor ritiene!
Quelli è Giasone—
—Con segni e con parole ornate
Isifile inganno ——
Tal colpa a tal martiro lui condanna,
Ed anche di MEDEA si fa vendetta.

INFERNO, C. 18.

"Behold that lofty shade, who this way tends,
And seems too woe-begone to drop a tear;
How yet the regal aspect he retains!
'T is Jason—
— He who with tokens and fair witching words
Hypsipyle beguil'd—
Such is the guilt condemns him to this pain;
Here too Medea's injuries are avenged!"—

CAREY.

And Chaucer in relating the same story, begins with a burst of generous indignation:

* Percy's Reliques.

Thou root* of false lovers, Duke Jason,
Thou slayer, devourer, and confusion
Of gentil women, gentil creatures!

The story of this double perfidy is told and commented on in the same chivalrous feeling; and the old poet concludes with characteristic tenderness and simplicity—

This was the mede of loving, and guerdon
That Medea received of Duke Jason,
Right for her truth and for her kindnesse,
That loved him better than herself I guesse!
And lefte her father and her heritage;
And of Jason this is the vassalage
That in his dayes were never none yfound,
So false a lover going on the ground.

It is in the same beautiful spirit of reverence to the best virtues of our sex, that Alcestis, the wife of Admetus, who sacrificed her life to prolong that of her husband, is honored above all other heroines of classical story. She has even been elevated into a kind of presiding divinity,—a second Venus, with nobler attributes,—and in her new existence is feigned to be the consort and companion of Love himself.

Another peculiarity of the poetry of the middle ages, was the worship paid to the daisy, (la Marguerite,) as symbolical of all that is lovely in women. Why so lowly a flower should take prece-

* *Root*, i. e. example or beginner.

dence of the queenly lily and the sumptuous rose, is not very clear; but it seems to have originated with one of the old Provençal poets, whose mistress bore the name of Marguerite; and afterwards it became a fashion and a kind of poetical mythology.*

Thus in the "Flower and the Leafe" of Chaucer, the ladies and knights of the flower approach singing a chorus in honor of the Daisy, of which the burden is "si douce est la Marguerite."

CHAPTER V.

GUIDO CAVALCANTI AND MANDETTA, CINO DA PISTOJA AND SELVAGGIA.

AMATORY poetry was transmitted from the Provençals to the Italians and Sicilians, among whom the language of the Troubadours had long been cultivated, and their songs imitated, but in style yet more affected and *recherché*. Few of the Italian poets who preceded Dante, are interesting even in a mere literary point of view: of these, only one or two have shed a reflected splendor round the object of their adoration. Guido Caval

* See the notes to Chaucer, the works of Froissart, and Mémoirs sur les Troubadours.

canti, the Florentine, was the early and favorite friend of Dante: being engaged in the factions of his native city, he was forced on some emergency to quit it; and to escape the vengeance of the prevailing party, he undertook a pilgrimage to San Jago. Passing through Tolosa, he fell in love with a beautiful Spanish girl, whom he has celebrated under the name of *Mandetta:*

> In un boschetto trovai pastorella
> Più che la stella bella al mio parere,
> Capegli avea biondetti e ricciutelli.

Some of his songs and ballads have considerable grace and nature, but they were considered by himself as mere trifles. His grand work on which his fame long rested is, a "Canzone sopra l'Amore," in which the subject is so profoundly and so philosophically treated, that seven voluminous commentaries in Latin and Italian have not yet enabled the world to understand it.

The following sonnet is deservedly celebrated for the consummate beauty of the picture it presents, and will give a fair idea of the platonic extravagance of the time.

> Chi è questa che vien ch' ogni uom la mira!
> Che fa tremar di caritate l' a're?
> E mena seco amor, sì che parlare
> Null' uom ne puote; ma ciascun sospira?
> Ahi dio! che sembra quando gli occhi gira!
> Dicalo Amor, ch' io nol saprei contare;

Cotanto d' umiltâ donna mi pare
Che ciascun' altra inver di lei chiam' ira.
Non si porria contar la sua piacenza;
Che a lei s'inchina ogni gentil virtute,
E la beltate per sua Dea la mostra.
Non è si alta già la mente nostra
E non s'è posta in noi tanta salute
Che propriamente n' abbian conoscenza!

LITERAL TRANSLATION.

"Who is this, on whom all men gaze as she approacheth!—who causeth the very air to tremble around her with tenderness?—who leadeth Love by her side—in whose presence men are dumb; and can only sigh? Ah! Heaven! what power in every glance of those eyes! Love alone can tell; for I have neither words nor skill! She alone is the Lady of gentleness—beside her, all others seem ungracious and unkind. Who can describe her sweetness, her loveliness? to her every virtue bows, and beauty points to her as her own divinity. The mind of man cannot soar so high, nor is it sufficiently purified by divine grace to understand and appreciate all her perfections!"

The vagueness of this portrait is a part of its beauty:—it is like a lovely dream—and probably never had any existence, but in the fancy of the Poet.

Cino da Pistoia enjoyed the double reputation of being the greatest doctor and teacher of the civil law, and the most famous poet of his time. He was also remarkable for his personal accomplishments and his love of pleasure. There is a

sonnet which Dante addressed to Cino, reproaching him with being inconstant and volatile in love.* Apparently, this was after the death of the beautiful Ricciarde dei Selvaggi; or, as he calls her, his Selvaggia: she was of a noble family of Pistoia, her father having been gonfaliere, and leader of the faction of the Bianchi; and she was also celebrated for her poetical talents. It appears from a little madrigal of hers, which has been preserved, that though she tenderly returned the affection of her lover, it was without the knowledge of her haughty family. It is not distinguished for poetic power, but has at least the charm of perfect frankness and simplicity, and a kind of *abandon* that is quite bewitching.

A MESSER CINO DA PISTOJA.

Gentil mio sir, lo parlare amoroso
Di voi sì in allegranza mi mantene,
Che dirvel non poria, ben lo sacciate;
Perchè del mio amor sete giojoso,
Di ciò grand' allegria e gio' mi vene,
Ed altro mai non haggio in volontate,
Fuor del vostro piacere;
Tutt' hora fate la vostra voglienza:
Haggiate previdenza
Voi, di celar la nostra desienza.

"My gentle love and lord! those tender words
Of thine so fill my conscious heart with joy,

* Chi s' innamora, siccome voi fate
Ed ad ogni piacer si lega e scioglie
Mostra ch' amor leggermente il seatti.—SON. 44

—I cannot speak it—but thou know'st it well;
Wherefore do thou rejoice in that deep love
I bear thee, knowing that I have no thought
But to fulfil thy will and crown thy wish;
—Watch thou—and hide our mutual hope from all!"

Meantime the parents of Ricciarda were exiled from Pistoia, by the faction of the Neri. They took refuge from their enemies in a little fortress among the Apennines, whither Cino followed them, and was received as a comforter amid their distresses. Probably the days passed in this dreary abode, among the wild and solitary hills, when he assisted Ricciarda in her household duties, and in aiding and consoling her parents, were among the happiest of his life; but the winter came, and with it many privations and many hardships. Their mountain retreat was ill calculated to defend them against the fury of the elements: Ricciarda drooped under the pressure of misery and want, and her parents and her lover watched the gradual extinction of life—saw the rose-hue fade from her cheek, and the light from her eye, till she melted from their arms into death; then they buried her with tears, in a nook among the mountains.

Many years afterwards, when Cino had reached the height of his fame, and had been crowned with wealth and honors by his native city, he had occasion to cross the Apennines on an embassy, and causing his suite to travel by another road, he made a pilgrimage alone to the tomb of his lost Selvaggia. This incident gave rise to the most

striking of all his compositions, which with great pathos and sweetness describes his feelings, when he flung himself down on her humble grave, to weep over the recollection of their past happiness:

Io fu' in sull' alto e in sul beato monte,
Ove adorai baciando il santo sasso,
E caddi in su quella pietra, oimè lasso!
Ove l' onestrà pose la sua fronte;
E ch' ella chiuse d' ogni virtù il fonte
Quel giorno che di morte acerbo passo
Fece la donna dello mio cor,—lasso!—
Già piena tutta d' adornezze conte.
Quivi chiamai a questa guisa Amore:
"Dolee mio Dio, fa che quinci mi traggia
La morte a se, che qui giace il mio cor!"
Ma poi che non m' intese il mio signore,
Mi disparti, pur chiamando, Selvaggia!
L'alpe passai, con voce di dolore.

The circumstance in the last stanza, "I rose up and went on my way, and passed the mountain summit, crying aloud 'Selvaggia!' in accents of despair," has a strong reality about it, and no doubt *was* real. Her death took place about 1316.

In the history of Italian poetry, Selvaggia is distinguished as the "*bel numer' una*,"—"the fair number one"—of the four celebrated women of that century—The others were Dante's Beatrice, Petrarch's Laura, and Boccaccio's Fiammetta.

Every one who reads and admires Petrarch, will remember his beautiful Sonnet on the Death of Cino, beginning "Piangete Donne."

Perchè l' nostro amoroso messer Cino
Novellamente s'è da noi partito.

In the venerable Cathedral at Pistoia, there is an ancient half-effaced bas-relief, representing Cino, surrounded by his disciples, to whom he is explaining the code of civil law; a little behind stands the figure of a female veiled, in a pensive attitude, which is supposed to represent Ricciarda de' Selvaggi.

All these are alluded to by Petrarch in the Trionfo d'Amore.

Ecco Selvaggia,
Ecco Cin da Pistoja: Guitton d'Arezzo;
Ecco i due Guidi che già furo in prezzo.

The two Guidi are, Guido Guizzinello, and Guido Cavalcanti. Guitone was a famous monk, who is said to have invented the present form of the sonnet: to him also is attributed the discovery of counterpoint, and the present system of musical notation.

Of Conti's mistress nothing is known, but that she had the most beautiful hand in the world, whence the volume of poems written by her lover in her praise, is entitled, *La Bella Mano*, the fair hand. Conti lived some years later than Petrarch. I mention him merely to fill up the list of those ancient minor poets of Italy, whose names and loves are still celebrated.

CHAPTER VI.

LAURA.

THERE are some who doubt the reality of Petrarch's love, because it is expressed in numbers; and others, refining on this doubt, profess even to question whether his Laura ever existed, except in the imagination and poetry of her lover. The first objection could only be made by the most prosaic of commentators—some true "black-letter dog," *—who had dustified and mystified his faculties among old parchments. The most real and most fervent passion that ever fell under my own knowledge, was revealed in verse, and very exquisite verse too, and has inspired many an effusion, full of beauty, fancy, and poetry; but it has not, therefore, been counted less sincere; and Heaven forbid it should prove less lasting than if it had been told in the homeliest prose, and had never inspired one beautiful idea or one rapturous verse!

To study Petrarch in his own works, and in his own delightful language; to follow him line by line through all the vicissitudes and contradictions of passion; to listen to his self-reproaches, his terrors, his regrets, his conflicts; to dwell on his exquisite delineations of individual character and peculiar beauty, his simple touches of profound pathos and

* See Pursuits of Literature.

melancholy tenderness;—and then believe all to be mere invention,—the coinage of the brain,—a tissue of visionary fancies, in which the heart had no share; to confound him with the cold metaphysical rhymesters of a later age,—seems to argue not only a strange want of judgment, but an extraordinary obtuseness of feeling.*

The faults of taste of which Petrarch has been accused over and over again, by those who seem to have studied him as Voltaire studied Shakspeare, —his *concetti*—his fanciful adoration of the laurel, as the emblem of Laura—his playing on the words *Laura*, *L'aura*, and *Lauro*, his *freezing flames* and *burning ice*,—I abandon to critics, and let them make the best of them, as defects in what were else perfection.

These were the fashion of the day: a great genius may outrun his times, but not without bearing about him some ineffaceable impressions of the manners and characters of the age in which he lived. He is too witty—"Il a trop d'esprit," to be sincere, say the critics,—"he has a conceit left him in his misery,—a miserable conceit;" but we

* In a private letter of Petrarch to the Bishop of Lombes, occurs the following passage—(the Bishop, it appears, had rallied him on the subject of his attachment.) "Would to God that my Laura were indeed but an imaginary person, and my passion for her but sport!—Alas! it is rather a madness!—hard would it have been, and painful, to feign so long a time—and what extravagance to play such a farce in the world! No! we may counterfeit the action and voice of a sick man, but not the paleness and wasted looks of the sufferer; and how often have you witnessed both in me." Sade, vol. i. p. 281.

know—at least *I* know—how in the very extremity of passion the soul can mock at itself—how the fancy can, with a bitter and exaggerated gayety, sport with the heart! These are faults of composition in the writer, and admitted to be such; but they prove nothing against the man, the poet, or the lover. The reproach of monotony, I confess I never could understand. It is rather matter of astonishment, how, in a collection of nearly four hundred poems, all, with one or two exceptions, turning upon the same subject and sentiment, the poet has poured forth such an endless and redundant variety, both of thought and feeling—how from the wide universe, the changeful face of all beautiful nature, the treasures of antique learning, and, above all, from his own overflowing heart, he has drawn those lovely pictures, allusions, situations, sentiments, and reflections, which have, indeed, been stolen, borrowed, imitated, worn threadbare by succeeding poets, but in him were the fresh and spontaneous effusions of profound feeling and luxuriant fancy. Schlegel very justly observes, that the impression of monotony may arise from our considering at one view, and bound up in one volume, a long series of poems, which were written in the course of many years, at different times and on different occasions. Laura herself, he avers, would certainly have been *ennuyée* to death with her own praises, if she had been obliged to read over, at one sitting, all the verses which her lover composed on her charms; and I agree with him.

It appears to me that the very impression of Petrarch's individual character, and the circumstances of his life, on the whole mass of his poetry, are evidence of the truth of his attachment, and the reality of its object. He was by nature a poet; his love was, therefore, poetical: he loved "in numbers, for the numbers came." He was an accomplished scholar in a pedantic age,—and his love is, therefore, illustrated by such comparisons and turns of thought as were allied to his habitual studies. He had a fertile and playful fancy, and his love is adorned by all the luxuriance of his imagination. He had been educated for the profession of the Civil Law, "per vender parole anzi mensogne,"—to sell words and lies, as he disdainfully expressed it,—and his love is mixed up with subtile reasonings on his own hapless state. He was a philosopher, and it is tinged with the mystic reveries of Platonism, the favorite and fashionable philosophy of the age. He was deeply religious, and the strain of devotional and moral feeling which mingles with that of passion, or of grief,—his fears lest the excess of his earthly affections should interfere with his eternal salvation, his continual allusions to his faith, to a future existence, and the nothingness and vanity of the world,—are not so many proofs of his profaneness, but of his sincerity. He was suspicious, irritable, and susceptible; subject to quick transitions of feeling; raised by a word to hope—plunged by a glance into despair; just such a finely-toned instrument as a

woman loves to play on;—and all this we have set forth in the contradictions, the self-reproaches, the little daily vicissitudes which are events and revolutions in a life of passion; a life which, when exhibited in the rich and softening tints of poetry, has all the power of strong interest, united to the charm of harmony and expression; but in the reality, and in plain prose, cannot be contemplated without a painful compassion. "The day may perhaps come," says Petrarch in one of his familiar letters,* "when I shall have calmness enough to contemplate all the misery of my soul, to examine my passion, not, however, that I may continue to love her—but that I may love thee alone, O my God! But at this day, how many obstacles have I yet to surmount, how many efforts have I yet to make! I no longer love as I did love, but still I love; I love in spite of myself—in lamentations and in tears. I will hate her—no!—I must still love her!" Seven years afterwards he writes,—"my love is extreme, but it is exclusive and virtuous—virtuous!—no!—this disquietude, these suspicions, these transports, this watchfulness, this utter weariness of every thing, are not signs of a virtuous love!" What a picture of an impassioned and distracted heart!

* * * * *

And who was this Laura, the illustrious object of a passion which has filled the wide universe from side to side with her name and fame? What was

* Quoted by Foscolo.

her station, her birth, her lineage? What were her transcendent qualities of person, heart, and mind, that she should have swayed, with such despotic and distracting power, one of the sovereign spirits of the age? Is it not enough that we acknowledge her to have been Petrarch's love—as chaste as fair?

> And whether coldness, pride, or virtue, dignify
> A woman, so she is good, what does it signify?

In the present case, it signifies much;—we are not to be put off with a witty or satirical couplet:—the insatiable curiosity which Laura has excited from age to age—the volumes which have been written on the subject—are a proof of the sincerity of her lover; for nothing but truth could ever inspire this lasting and universal interest. But without diving into these dry disputations, let us take Laura's portrait from Petrarch himself, drawn, it will be said, by the partial hand of a poetic lover:—true; but since Laura is interesting to us from the charms she possessed in his eyes, it were unfair to seek her portraiture elsewhere.

Laura was of high birth and station, though her life was spent in retirement and domestic cares·

> In nobil sangue, vita umile e quete.

Her father, Audibert de Noves, was of the *haute noblesse* of Avignon, and died in her infancy, leaving her a dowry of 1000 gold crowns, (about

10,000 pounds,)—a magnificent portion for those times. She was married at the age of eighteen to Hugh de Sade, a man of rank equal to her own, and of corresponding age, but not distinguished by any advantages either of person or mind. The marriage contract is dated in January, 1325, two years before her first meeting with Petrarch: and in it, her mother, the Lady of Ermessende, and brother John de Noves, stipulate to pay the dower left by her father; and also to bestow on the bride two magnificent dresses for state occasions; one of green, embroidered with violets; the other of crimson, trimmed with feathers. In all the portraits of Laura now extant, she is represented in one of these two dresses, and they are frequently alluded to by Petrarch. He tells us expressly, that when he first met her at matins in the Church of St. Claire, she was habited in a robe of green, spotted with violets.* Mention is also made of a coronal of silver with which she wreathed her hair; of her necklaces and ornaments of pearl. Diamonds are not once alluded to, because the art of cutting them had not then been invented. From all which, it appears, that Laura was opulent, and moved in the first class of society. It was customary for the women of rank, in those times, to dress with extreme simplicity on ordinary occasions, but with the most gorgeous splendor when they appeared in public. There are some beautiful descriptions of Laura surrounded by her young female compan-

* Canz. xv. Sonnet 10.

ions, divested of all her splendid apparel, in a simple white robe and a few flowers in her hair; but still preëminent over all by her superior loveliness. From the frequent allusions to her dress, and Petrarch's angry apostrophes to her mirror, because it assisted to heighten charms already too destructive,* we may infer that Laura was not unmindful of the cares of the toilet.

She was in person a fair Madonna-like beauty, with soft dark eyes, and a profusion of pale golden hair parted on her brow, and falling in rich curls over her neck. He dwells on the celestial grace of her figure and movement, "l' andar celeste."

> Non era l' andar suo cosa mortale
> Ma d' angelica forma.

He describes the beauty of her hand in the 166th sonnet,—

> O bella man che mi distringi il core.

And the loveliness of her mouth,—

> La bella bocca angelica.

The general character of her beauty must have been pensive, soft, unobtrusive, and even somewhat languid:

> L' angelica sembianza umile e piana—
> L' atto mansuetto, umile e tardo—

the last line is exquisitely characteristic. This ex-

* See Son. 37, 38, &c

treme softness and repose must have been far removed from insipidity; for he dwells also on the rare and varying expression of her loveliness, "Leggiadria singolare e pellegrina;"—the lightning of her smile, "Il lampeggiar dell' angelico riso;"—and the tender magic of her voice, which was felt in the inmost heart, "Il cantar che nell' anima si sente." She had a habit of veiling her eyes with her hand, and her looks were generally bent on the earth, "o per umiltade o per orgoglio." In the portrait of Laura, which I saw at the Laurentian Library at Florence, the eyes have this characteristic downcast look. Her lover complains also of a veil, which she was fond of wearing. Wandering in the country, one summer's day, he sees a young peasant-girl washing a veil in the running stream; he recognizes the very texture which had so often intervened between him and the heaven of Laura's beauty, and he trembles as if he had been in the presence of Laura herself. This little incident is the subject of the first Madrigal.

He describes her dignified humility, "l' umiltà superba;"—her beautiful silence, "il bel tacere;"—her frequent sighs, "i sospir soavemente rotti;"—her sweet disdain and gentle repulses, "dolci sdegni, placide repulse;"—the gesture which spoke without the aid of words, "l' atto che parla con silenzio." The picture, it must be confessed, is most finished, most delicate, most beautiful;—supposing only half to be true, it is still beautiful. But far

more flattering, and more honorable to Laura, is her lover's confession of the influence which her charming character possessed over him; for it is certain that we owe to Laura's exquisite purity of mind and manners, the polished delicacy of the homage addressed to her. Passing over, of course, the circumstance of her being a married woman, and therefore not a proper object of amorous verse,—there is not in all the poetry she inspired, a line of sentiment which angels might not hear and approve. Petrarch represents her as expressing neither surprise nor admiration at the self sacrifice of Lucretia, but only wondering that shame and grief had not anticipated the dagger of the Roman matron. He describes her conversation, "pien d'intelletti dolci ed alti," and her mind ever serene, though her countenance was pensive, "in aspetto pensoso, a nima lieta." He tells us that she had raised him above all low-thoughted cares, and purified his heart from all base desires. "I bless the place, the time, the hour, when I presumed to lift my eyes upon her,—I say, O my soul, thankful shouldst thou be that hast been deemed worthy of such high honor—for from her spring those gentle thoughts which shall lead thee to aspire to the highest good, and to disdain all that the vulgar mind desires."

I' benedico il loco e 'l tempo e l' ora
Che si alti miraron gli occhi miei;
E dico: anima, assai ringraziar dei
Che fosti a tanto onor degnata allora.

* * * * *

Da lei ti vien l' amoroso pensiero
Che, mentre 'l segui all' Sommo ben t' invia
Poco prezzando quel ch' ogni uom desia.

Every generous feeling, every noble and elevated sentiment, every desire for improvement, he refers to her, and to her only:

S' alcun bel frutto
Nasce di me, da voi vien prima il seme,
Io per me son quasi un terreno asciutto
Colto da voi; e 'l pregio è vostro in tutto.
CANZONE 8.

He gives us in a single line the very *beau idéal* of a female character, when he tells us that Laura united the highest intellect with the purest heart, "In alto intelletto un puro core." He dwells with rapture on her angelic modesty, which excited at once his reverence and his despair; but he confesses that he still hopes something from the pitying tenderness of her disposition.—

Non è sì duro cor, che lagrimando,
Pregando, amando, talor non si smova
Nè si freddo voler, che non si scalde.

The attachment inspired by such a woman was not likely to be lessened by absence, or removed by death itself; and it is certain that the second part of the Canzonière of Petrarch, written after the death of Laura, is more beautiful than the first part: in a more impassioned style, a higher tone of feeling, with far fewer faults, both of taste and style.

* * * * *

It will be said perhaps that "the picture of such a mind as Petrarch's, enslaved and distracted by a dreaming passion, employed even in his declining years, in writing and polishing love verses, is a pitiable subject of contemplation; that if he had not left us his Canzonière, he would probably have performed some other excelling work of genius, which would have crowned him with equal or superior glory; and that if he had never been the lover of Laura, he would have been no less that master-spirit who gave the leading impulse to the age in which he lived, by consecrating his life, his energies, all his splendid talents, to the cultivation of philosophy and the fine arts, the extension of learning and liberty, and the general improvement of mankind."

I doubt this, and I appeal to Petrarch himself.

I believe there is no version into English of the 48th Canzone. If Lady Dacre had executed it—and in the same spirit as the "Chiare, fresche e dolce acque," and the "Italia mia," the reader had been spared my abortive prose sketch, which will give as just an idea of the original as a hasty pencilled outline of one of Titian's or Domenichino's master-pieces would give us of all the magic coloring and effect of their glorious and half-breathing creations.

In this Canzone, Petrarch, in a high strain of poetic imagery, which takes nothing from the truth or pathos of the sentiment, allegorizes his own

situation and feelings: he represents himself as citing the Lord of Love, "Suo empio e dolce Signore," before the throne of Reason, and accusing him as the cause of all his sufferings, sorrows, errors, and misspent time. "Through *him* (Love) I have endured, even from the moment I was first beguiled into his power, such various and such exquisite pain, that my patience has at length been exhausted, and I have abhorred my existence. I have not only forsaken the path of ambition and useful exertion, but even of pleasure and of happiness: I, who was born, if I do not deceive myself, for far higher purposes than to be a mere amorous slave! Through *him* I have been careless of my duty to Heaven,—negligent of myself:—for the sake of one woman I forgot all else!—me miserable! What have availed me all the high and precious gifts of Heaven, the talents, the genius, which raised me above other men? My hairs are changed to gray, but still my heart changeth not. Hath he not sent me wandering over the earth in search of repose? hath he not driven me from city to city, and through forests, and woods, and wild solitudes? * hath he not deprived me of peace, and of that sleep which no herbs nor chanted spells have power to restore? Through him, I have become a by-word in the world, which I have filled with my lamentations, till, by their repetition, I have wearied myself, and perhaps all others."

* Foscolo remarks the restless spirit which all his life drove Petrarch, like a perturbed spirit, from one residence to another.

To this long tirade, Love with indignation replies: "Hearest thou the falsehood of this ungrateful man? This is he who in his youth devoted himself to the despicable traffic of words and lies, and now he blushes not to reproach me with having raised him from obscurity, to know the delights of an honorable and virtuous life. I gave him power to attain a height of fame and virtue to which of himself he had never dared to aspire. If he has obtained a name among men, to me he owes it. Let him remember the great heroes and poets of antiquity, whose evil stars condemned them to lavish their love upon unworthy objects, whose mistresses were courtezans and slaves; while for him, I chose from the whole world one lovely woman, so gifted by Heaven with all female excellence, that her likeness is not to be found beneath the moon,—one whose melodious voice and gentle accents had power to banish from his heart every vain, and dark, and vicious thought. These were the wrongs of which he complains: such is my reward for all I have done for him,—ungrateful man! Upon my wings hath he soared upwards, till his name is placed among the greatest of the sons of song, and fair ladies and gentle knights listen with delight to his strains:—had it not been for me, what had he become before now? Perhaps a vain flatterer, seeking preferment in a Court, confounded among the herd of vulgar men! I have so chastened, so purified his heart through the heavenly image impressed upon it, that even

in his youth, and in the age of the passions, I preserved him pure in thought and in action; * whatever of good or great ever stirred within his breast, he derives from her and from me. From the contemplation of virtue, sweetness, and beauty, in the gracious countenance of her he loved, I led him upwards to the adoration of the first Great Cause, the fountain of all that is beautiful and excellent·—hath he not himself confessed it? And this fair creature, whom I gave him to be the honor, and delight, and prop of his frail life"—

Here the sense is suddenly broken off in the middle of a line. Petrarch utters a cry of horror, and exclaims—"Yes, you gave her to me, but you have also taken her from me!"

Love replies with sweet austerity—"not I—but HE—the eternal One—who hath willed it so!"

After this, it will be allowed, I think, that it is to Laura we owe Petrarch; and that if the recompense she bestowed on him was not exactly that which he sought,—yet in fame, in greatness, in virtue, and in happiness, she well and richly repaid the adoration he lavished at her feet, and the glorious wreath of song with which he has circled her brows!

* * * * *

* Here Petrarch seems to have forgotten himself; he was not *always* immaculate.

CHAPTER VII.

LAURA AND PETRARCH.

CONTINUED.

MUCH power of lively ridicule, much coarse wit, —principally French wit,—has been expended on the subject of Laura's virtue; by those, I presume, who under similar circumstances would have found such virtue "too painful an endeavour."* Much depraved ingenuity has been exerted to twist certain lines and passages in the Canzonière into a sense which shall blot with frailty the memory of this beautiful and far-famed being: once believe

* Madame Deshoulières speaks "avec connaissance de fait," and even points out the very spot in which Laura, "de l'amoreux Patrarque adoucit le martyre."—Another French lady, who piqued herself on being a descendant of the family of Laura, was extremely affronted and scandalized when the Chevalier Ramsay asserted that Petrarch's passion was purely poetical and platonic, and regarded it heresy to suppose that Laura could have been "*ungrateful*,"—such was her idea of feminine *gratitude!*—(Spence's Anecdotes.) Then comes another French woman, with the most anti-poetical soul that God ever placed within the form of a woman—"Le fade personage que votre Petrarque! que sa Laure était sotte et precieuse! que la Cour d'Amour était fastidieuse!" &c., exclaims the acute, amusing, profligate, heartless Madame du Deffand. It must be allowed that Petrarch and Laura would have been extremely *displaçes* in the Court of the Regent,—the only *Court of Love* with which Madame du Deffand was acquainted, and which assuredly was not *fastidieuse*.

these interpretations, and all the peculiar and graceful charm which now hangs round her intercourse with Petrarch vanishes,—the reverential delicacy of the poet's homage becomes a mockery, and all his exalted praises of her unequalled virtue, and her invincible chastity, are turned to satire, and insult our moral feeling.

But the question, I believe, is finally set at rest, and it were idle to war with epigrams. All the evidence that has been collected, external and internal, prose and poetry, critical and traditional, tends to prove, first, that Laura preserved her virtue to the last; and secondly, that she did not preserve it unassailed; that Petrarch, true to his sex,—a very man, (as Laura has been called a *very woman*,) used at first every art, every effort, every advantage, which his diversified accomplishments of mind and person lent him, to destroy the very virtue he adored. He only *hints* this in his poetry, just sufficiently to enhance the glory which he has thrown round his divinity: but he speaks more plainly in prose.

"Untouched by my prayers, unvanquished by my arguments, unmoved by my flattery, she remained faithful to her sex's honor; she resisted her own young heart, and mine, and a thousand, thousand, thousand things, which must have conquered any other. She remained unshaken. A woman taught me the duty of a man! to persuade me to keep the path of virtue, her conduct was at once an example and a reproach; and when she

beheld me break through all bounds, and rush blindly to the precipice, she had the courage to abandon me, rather than follow me." *

But whether, in this long conflict, Laura preserved her heart untouched, as well as her virtue immaculate; whether she shared the love she inspired; or whether she escaped from the captivating assiduities and intoxicating homage of her lover, "*fancy-free;*"—whether coldness, or prudence, or pride, or virtue, or the mere heartless love of admiration, or a mixture of all together, dictated her conduct, is at least as well worth inquiry, as the exact color of her eyes, or the form of her nose, upon which we have pages of grave discussion. She might have been *coquette par instinct*, if not *par calcul;* she might have felt, with feminine *tacte*, that to preserve her influence over Petrarch, it was necessary to preserve his respect. She was evidently proud of her conquest: she had else been more or less than woman; and at every hazard, but that of self-respect, she was resolved to retain him. If Petrarch absented himself for a few days, he was generally better treated on his return.† If he avoided her, then her eye followed him with a softer expression. When he looked pale from sickness of heart and agitation of spirits,

* From the Dialogues with St. Augustin, as quoted in the "Pieces Justificatives," and by Ginguené (Hist. Litt. vol. iii. notes.) These imaginary dialogues are a series of Confessions not intended for publication by Petrarch, but now printed with his prose works.

† Sonnet 39

Laura would address him with a few words of pitying tenderness. He thanks her in those exquisite lines, which seem to glow with all the renovation of hope,

Volgendo gli occhi al mio novo colore
Che fa di morte rimembrar le gente
Pietà vi mosse, onde benignamente
Salutando teneste in vita il core.
La frale vita ch' ancor meco alberga,
Fu de' begli occhi vostri aperto dono,
E della voce angelica soave!*

He presumes upon this benignity, and is again dashed back with frowns. He flies to solitude,—solitude!—Never let the proud and torn heart, wrung with the sense of injury, and sick with unrequited passion, seek that worst resource against pain, for there grief grows by contemplation of itself, and every feeling is sharpened by collision. Petrarch sought to "mitigate the fever of his heart" amid the shades of Vaucluse, a spot so gloomy and so solitary, that his very servants forsook him; and Vaucluse, its fountains, its forests, and its hanging cliffs, reflected only the image of Laura.

L'acque parlan d'amore, e l'aura, e i rami
E gli augeletti, e i pesci e i fiori e l'erba;
Tutti insieme pregando ch' io sempr' ami!†

* Ballata 5.

† Petrarch withdrew to Vaucluse in 1337, and spent three years in entire solitude. He commenced his journey to Rome in 1341, about fourteen years after his first interview with Laura.

He is driven again to her feet by his own insupportable thoughts—and in terror of himself:—

Tal paura ho di ritrovarmi solo!

He endeavours to maintain in her presence that self-constraint she had enjoined. He assumes a cold and calm deportment, and Laura, as she passes him, whispers in a tone of gentle reproach, "Petrarch! are you so soon weary of loving me?" (ten or eleven years of adoration were, in truth, nothing—*to signify!*) At length, he resolved to leave Laura and Avignon forever; and instead of plunging into solitude, to seek the wiser resource of travel and society. He announced this intention to Laura, and bade her a long farewell; either through surprise, or grief, or the fear of losing her glorious captive, she turned exceedingly pale, a cloud overspread her beautiful countenance, and she fixed her eyes on the ground. This was to her lover an intoxicating moment: in the exultation of sudden delight, he interpreted these symptoms of relenting, this "vago impallidir," too favorably to himself. "She bent those gentle eyes upon the earth, which in their sweet silence said,—to me at least they seemed to say,—'who takes my faithful friend so far from me?'"

Chinava a terra il bel guardo gentile,
E tacendo dicea, com' a me parve—
"Chi m' allontana il mio fedele amico?"

On his return to Avignon, a few months afterwards, Laura received him with evident pleasure;

but he is not, therefore, more *avançé;* all this was probably the refined coqetterie of a woman of calm passions; but not heartless, not really indifferent to the devotion she inspired, nor ungrateful for it.

Petrarch has himself left us a most minute and interesting description of the whole course of Laura's conduct towards him, which by a beautiful figure of poetry he has placed in her own mouth. The passage occurs in the TRIONFO DI MORTE, beginning, "La notte che segui l'orribil caso."

The apparition of Laura descending on the morning dew, bright as the opening dawn, and crowned with Oriental gems,

Di gemme orientali incoronata,

appears before her lover, and addresses him with compassionate tenderness. After a short dialogue, full of poetic beauty and noble thoughts,* Petrarch conjures her, in the name of heaven and of truth, to tell him whether the pity she sometimes expressed for him was allied to love? for that the sweetness she mingled with her disdain and reserve—the soft looks with which she tempered her anger, had left him for long years in doubt of her real sentiments, still doating, still suspecting, still hoping without end:

* Petrarch asks her whether it was "pain to die?" she replies in those fine lines which have been quoted a thousand times:

La Morte è fin d'una prigion oscura
Agli animi gentili; agli altri è noia,
Ch' hanno posto nel fango ogni lor cura.

Creovvi amor pensier mai nella testa,
D' aver pietà del mio lungo martire
Non lasciando vostr' alta impresa onesta?

Che vostri dolci sdegni e le dolc' ire—
Le dolci paci ne' begli occhi scritte—
Tenner molt' anni in dubbio il mio desire.

She replies evasively, with a smile and a sigh, that her heart was ever with him, but that to preserve her own fair fame, and the virtue of both, it was necessary to assume the guise of severity and disdain. She describes the arts with which she kept alive his passion, now checking his presumption with the most frigid reserve, and when she saw him drooping, as a man ready to die, "all fancy-sick and pale of cheer," gently restoring him with soft looks and kind words:

"Salvando la tua vita e'l nostro onore."

She confesses the delight she felt in being beloved, and the pride she took in being sung by so great a poet. She reminds him of one particular occasion, when seated by her side, and they were left alone, he sang to his lute a song composed to her praise, beginning, "Dir più non osa il nostro amore;" and she asks him whether he did not perceive that the veil had then nearly fallen from her heart?*

* Ma non si ruppe almen ogni vel quando
Sola i tuoi detti, te presente accolsi
"*Dir più non osa il nostro amor*," cantando.

(The song here alluded to is not preserved in Petrarch's works and the expression "*il nostro amore*," is very remarkable.)

She laments, in some exquisite lines, that she had not the happiness to be born in Italy, the native country of her lover, and yet allows that the land must needs be fair in which she first won his affection.

Duolmi ancor veramente, ch'io non nacqui
Almen più presso al tuo fiorito nido!—
Ma assai fu bel päese ov' io ti piacqui.

In another passage we have a sentiment evidently taken from nature, and exquisitely graceful and feminine. "You," says Laura, "proclaimed to all men the passion you felt for me: you called aloud for pity: you kept not the tender secret for me alone, but took a pride and a pleasure in publishing it forth to the world; thus constraining me, by all a woman's fear and modesty, to be silent."—"But not less is the pain because we conceal it in the depths of the heart, nor the greater because we lament aloud; fiction and poetry can add nothing to truth, nor yet take from it."

Tu eri di mercè chiamar già roco
Quand' io tacea; perchè vergogna e tema
Facean molto desir, parer si poco;
Non è minor il duol perch' altri 'l prema,
Ne maggior per andarsi lamentando:
Per fizïon non cresce il ver, nè scema.

Petrarch, then all trembling and in tears, exclaims, "that could he but believe he had been dear to her eyes as to her heart, he were suffi-

ciently recompensed for all his sufferings;" and she replies, "that will I never reveal!" ("*quello mi taccio.*") By this coquettish and characteristic answer, we are still left in the dark. Such was the sacred respect in which Petrarch held her he so loved, that though he evidently wishes to believe—perhaps *did* believe, that he had touched her heart, he would not presume to insinuate what Laura had never avowed. The whole scene, though less polished in the versification than some of his sonnets, is written throughout with all the flow and fervor of real feeling. It received the poet's last corrections twenty-six years after Laura's death, and but a few weeks previous to his own.

* * * * *

When at Milan, I was taken, as a matter of course, to visit the Ambrosian library. At the time I was in ill health, dejected and indifferent; and I only remember being led in passive resignation from room to room, and called upon to admire a vast variety of objects, at the moment when I was pining for rest; when to look, think, speak, or move, was pain,—when to sit motionless and to gaze out upon the sunshine, seemed to me the only supreme blessedness. In such moments as these, we can have sympathies with nature, but not with old books and antiquities. I have a most confused recollection both of the locality and the contents of this famous collection; but there were two objects which roused me from this sullen stupor, and indelibly impressed my imagination and my

memory; and one of these was the celebrated copy of Virgil, which had been the favorite companion and constant study of Petrarch, containing that memorandum of the death of Laura, in his own handwriting, which, after much expenditure of paper, and argument, and critical abuse, is at length admitted to be genuine. I knew little of the controversy this famous inscription had occasioned in Italy,—though I was aware that its authenticity had been disputed: but as a homely proverb saith, *seeing is believing;* to look upon the handwriting with my own eyes, would have made assurance doubly sure, if in that moment I needed such assurance. I do not remember reasoning or doubting on the subject;—but gushing up like the waters of an intermitting fountain, there was a sudden flow of feeling and memory came over my heart:—I stood for some moments silently contemplating the name of LAURA, in the pale, half-effaced characters traced by the hand of her lover; that name with which his genius and his love have filled the earth: confused thoughts of the mingling of vanity and glory,—of the "poco polvere che nulla sente," and the immortality of deified beauty, were crowded in my mind. When all were gone, I turned back, and gave the guide a small gratuity to be allowed to do homage to the name of Laura, by pressing my lips upon it. The reader smiles at this sentimental enthusiasm; so would I, if time had not taught me to respect, as well as regret, what it has taken from me, and never can restore.

The memorandum has often been quoted; but this account of the love of Petrarch would not be complete were it omitted here. It runs literally thus:—

"Laura, illustrious by her own virtues, and long celebrated by my verses, I beheld for the first time, in my early youth, on the 6th of April, 1327, about the first hour of the day, in the church of Saint Claire in Avignon: and in the same city, in the same month of April, the same day and hour, in the year 1348, this light of my life was withdrawn from the world while I was at Verona, ignorant, alas! of what had befallen me. The terrible intelligence was conveyed in a letter from Louis and reached me at Parma the 19th of May, early in the morning.

"Her chaste and beautiful remains were deposited the same day after vespers, in the Church of the Fratri Minori, (Cordeliers.) Her spirit, as Seneca said of Scipio Africanus,* has returned, doubtless, to that heaven whence it came.

"To preserve the memory of this afflicting loss, it is with a bitter pleasure I record it here, in this book which is ever before my eyes, that nothing in this world may hereafter delight me; and that the chief tie which bound me to life being broken, I

* This sounds at first pedantic; but it must be remembered that at this very time Petrarch was studying Seneca and writing a Latin poem on the history of Scipio: thus the ideas were fresh in his mind.

may, by frequently looking on these words, and thinking on this transitory existence, be prepared to quit this earthly Babylon, which, with the help of the divine grace, and the constant and manly recollection of those fruitless desires, and vain hopes, and sad vicissitudes which have so long agitated me, will be an easy task."

Laura died of the plague, which then desolated Avignon, and terminated the life of the sufferer on the third day. The moment she was seized with the fatal symptoms, she dictated her will; and notwithstanding the pestilential nature of her disorder, she was surrounded to the last by her numerous relations and friends, who braved death rather than forsake her.

Her tomb was discovered and opened in 1533, in the presence of Francis the First, whose celebrated stanzas on the occasion are well known.

Of the fame, which even in her lifetime, the love and poetical adoration of Petrarch had thrown round his Laura, a curious instance is given which will characterize the manners of the age. When Charles of Luxemburgh (afterwards Emperor) was at Avignon, a grand fête was given in his honor, at which all the noblesse were present. He desired that Petrarch's Laura should be pointed out to him; and when she was introduced, he made a sign with his hand that the other ladies present should fall back; then going up to Laura, and for a moment contemplating her with interest, he kissed her respectfully on the forehead and on

the eyelids. Petrarch alludes to this incident in the 201st sonnet, the last line of which shows that this royal salutation was considered singular.

"M' empia d'invidia l' atto dolce e strano."

Petrarch survived her twenty-six years, dying in 1374. He was found lifeless one morning in his study, his hand resting on a book.

* * * * *

The inferences I draw from this rapid sketch are, first, that Laura was virtuous, but not insensible;—for had she been facile, she would not have preserved her lover's respect; had she been a heartless trifler, she could not have retained his love, nor deserved his undying regrets: and secondly, that if Petrarch had not attached himself fervently to this beautiful and pure-hearted woman, he would have employed his splendid talents like other men of his time. He might then have left us theological treatises and Latin epics, which the worms would have eaten; he might have risen high in the church or state; have become a bold intriguing priest; a politic archbishop,—a cardinal,—a pope;—most worthless and empty titles all, compared with that by which he has descended to us, as Petrarch, the poet and lover of Laura!*

* The hypothesis I have assumed relative to Laura's character, her married state, and the authenticity of the MS. note in the Virgil, have not been lightly adopted, but from deep conviction and patient examination: but this is not the place to set arguments and authorities in array—Ginguené and Gibbon against Lord Byron and Fraser Tytler. I am surprised at the ground

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE LOVE OF DANTE FOR BEATRICE PORTINARI.

HAD I taken chronology into due consideration, Dante ought to have preceded Petrarch, having been born some forty years before him,—but I forgot it. "Truth," says Wordsworth, "has her pleasure-grounds,

Lord Byron has taken on the question. As for his characteristic sneer on the assertion of M. de Bastie, who had said truly and beautifully—"qu'il n'y a que la vertu seule qui soit capable de faire des impressions que la mort n'efface pas," I disdain, in my feminine character, to reply to it; I will therefore borrow the eloquence of a more powerful pen:—"The love of a man like Petrarch, would have been less in character if it had been less ideal. For the purposes of inspiration, a single interview was quite sufficient. The smile which sank into his heart the first time he ever beheld Laura, played round her lips ever after; the look with which her eyes first met his, never passed away. The image of his mistress still haunted his mind, and was recalled by every object in nature. Even death could not dissolve the fine illusion; for that which exists in the imagination is alone imperishable. As our feelings become more ideal, the impression of the moment indeed becomes less violent; but the effect is more general and permanent. The blow is felt only by reflection; it is the rebound that is fatal. We are not here standing up for this kind of Platonic attachment, but only endeavoring to explain the way in which the passions very commonly operate in minds accustomed to draw their strongest interest from constant contemplation." *Edinburgh Review.*

Her haunts of ease
And easy contemplation;—gay parterres
And labyrinthine walks; her sunny glades
And shady groves for recreation framed."

And such a haunted pleasure-ground of beautiful recollections, would I wish my subject to be to myself and to my readers; where we shall be privileged to wander at will; to pause or turn back; to deviate to this side or to that, as memory may prompt, or imagination lead, or illustration require.

Dante and his Beatrice are best exhibited in contrast to Petrarch and Laura. Petrarch was in his youth an amiable and accomplished courtier, whose ambition was to cultivate the arts, and please the fair. Dante, early plunged into the factions which distracted his native city, was of a stern commanding temper, mingling study with action. Petrarch loved with all the vivacity of his temper; he took a pleasure in publishing, in exaggerating, in embellishing his passion in the eyes of the world. Dante, capable of strong and enthusiastic tenderness, and early concentrating all the affections of his heart on one object, sought no sympathy; and solemnly tells us of himself,—in contradistinction to those poets of his time who wrote of love from fashion or fancy, not from feeling,—that he wrote as love inspired, and as his heart dictated.

"Io mi son un che, quando
Amore spira, noto, ed in quel modo
Ch'ei detta dentro, vo significando."

PURGATORIO, c. 24.

A coquette would have triumphed in such a captive as Petrarch: and in truth, Laura seems to have "sounded him from the top to the bottom of his compass:"—a tender and impassioned woman would repose on such a heart as Dante's, even as his Beatrice did. Petrarch had a gay and captivating exterior; his complexion was fair, with sparkling blue eyes and a ready smile. He is very amusing on the subject of his own coxcombry, and tells us how cautiously he used to turn the corner of a street, lest the wind should disorder the elaborate curls of his fine hair! Dante, too, was in his youth eminently handsome, but in a style of beauty which was characteristic of his mind: his eyes were large and intensely black, his nose aquiline, his complexion of a dark olive, his hair and beard very much curled, his step slow and measured, and the habitual expression of his countenance grave, with a tinge of melancholy abstraction. When Petrarch walked along the streets of Avignon, the women smiled, and said, "there goes the lover of Laura!" The impression which Dante left on those who beheld him, was far different. In allusion to his own personal appearance, he used to relate an incident that once occurred to him. When years of persecution and exile had added to the natural sternness of his countenance, the deep lines left by grief, and the brooding spirit of vengeance, he happened to be at Verona, where since the publication of the Inferno, he was well known. Passing one day by a portico, where

several women were seated, one of them whispered, with a look of awe,—"Do you see that man? that is he who goes down to hell whenever he pleases, and brings us back tidings of the sinners below!" "Ay, indeed!" replied her companion,—"very likely; see how his face is scarred with fire and brimstone, and blackened with smoke, and how his hair and beard have been singed and curled in the flames!"

Dante had not, however, this forbidding appearance when he won the young heart of Beatrice Portinari. They first met at a banquet given by her father, Folco de' Portinari, when Dante was only nine years old, and Beatrice a year younger His childish attachment, as he tells us himself, commenced from that hour; it became a passion, which increased with his years, and did not perish even with its object.

Beatrice has not fared better at the hands of commentators than Laura. Laura, with her golden hair scattered to the winds, "i capei d'oro al aura sporsi," her soft smiles, and her angel-like deportment, was to be Repentance; and the more majestic Beatrice, in whose eyes dwelt love,

E spiriti d' amore infiammati,

was sublimated into *Theology*; with how much reason we shall examine.

In one of his canzoni, called il Ritratto, (the Portrait,) Dante has left us a most minute and finished picture of his Beatrice, "which," says Mr.

Carey, "might well supply a painter with a far more exalted idea of female beauty, than he could form to himself from the celebrated Ode of Anacreon, on a similar subject." From this canzone and some lines scattered through his sonnets, I shall sketch the person and character of Beatrice. She was not in form like the slender and fragile-looking Laura, but on a larger scale of loveliness, tall and of a commanding figure; *—graceful in her gait as a peacock, upright as a crane,

> Soava a guisa va di un bel pavone,
> Diritta sopra se, come una grua.

Her hair was fair and curling,

> "Capegli crespi e biondi,"

but not *golden*—an epithet I do not find once applied to it; she had an ample forehead, "spaciossa fronte," a mouth that when it smiled surpassed all things in sweetness; so that her Poet would give the universe to hear it pronounce a kind "yes."

> Mira che quando ride
> Passa ben di dolcezza ogni altra cosa.
> Cosi dì quella bocca il pensier mio
> Mi sprona, perchè io
> Non ho nel mondo cosa che non desse
> A tal ch' un sì, con buon voler dicesse.

Her neck was white and slender, springing gracefully from the bust—

* "Membra formosi et grandi."

Poi guarda la sua svelta e bianca gola
Commessa ben dalle spalle e dal petto.

A small, round, dimpled chin,

Mento tondo, fesso e piccioletto:

and thereupon the Poet breaks out into a rapture any thing but theological,

Il bel diletto
Aver quel collo fra le braccia stretto
E far in quella gola un picciol segno!

Her arms were beautiful and round; her hand soft, white, and polished;

La bianca mano morbida e pulita:

her fingers slender, and decorated with jewelled rings as became her birth; fair she was as a pearl;

Con un color angelica di perla:

graceful and lovely to look upon, but disdainful where it was becoming:

Graziosa a vederla,
E disdegnosa dove si conviene.

And, as a corollary to these traits, I will quote the eleventh Sonnet as a more general picture of female loveliness, heightened by some tender touches of mental and moral beauty, such as never seem to have occurred to the debased imaginations of the classic poets:

Negli occhi porta la mia Donna Amore;
Perchè si fa gentil ciocch' ella mira;
Ov' ella passa, ogni uom ver lei si gira;
E cui saluta, fa tremar lo core,
Sicchè bassando 'l viso tutto smuore,
Ed ogni suo difetto allor sospira;
Fugge dinanzi a lei superbia ed ira.
Ajutatemi, donne, a farle onore!
Ogni dolcezza, ogni pensiero umile
Nasce nel core a chi parlar la sente;
Onde è laudato chi prima la vide.
Quel ch' ella par, quando un poco sorride
No si può dicer, nè tener a mente;
Si è nuovo miracolo e gentile.

TRANSLATION.

"Love is throned in the eyes of my Beatrice! they ennoble every thing she looks upon! As she passes, men turn and gaze; and whomsoever she salutes, his heart trembles within him; he bows his head, the color forsakes his cheek, and he sighs for his own unworthiness. Pride and anger fly before her! Assist me, ladies, to do her honor! All sweet thoughts of humble love and goodwill spring in the hearts of those who hear her speak, so that it is a blessedness first to behold her, and when she faintly and softly smiles—ah! then it passes all fancy, all expression, so wondrous is the miracle, and so gracious!"

The love of Dante for his Beatrice partook of the purity, tenderness, and elevated character of her who inspired it, and was also stamped with that stern and melancholy abstraction, that disposition to mysticism, which were such strong features in the character of her lover. He does not break out into fond and effeminate complaints, he does not

sigh to the winds, nor swell the fountain with his tears; his love does not, like Petrarch's, alternately freeze and burn him, nor is it "un dolce amaro," "a bitter sweet," with which his fancy can sport in good set terms. No; it shakes his whole being like an earthquake; it beats in every pulse and artery; it has dwelt in his heart till it has become a part of his life, or rather his life itself.* Though we are not told so expressly, it is impossible to doubt, on a consideration of all those passages and poems which relate to Beatrice, that his love was approved and returned, and that his character was understood and appreciated by a woman too generous, too noble-minded, to make him the sport of her vanity. He complains, indeed, *poetically* of her disdain, for which he excuses himself in another poem: "We know that the heavens shine on in eternal serenity, and that it is only our imperfect vision, and the rising vapors of the earth, that make the ever-beaming stars appear clouded at times to our eye." He expresses no fear of a rival in her affections; but the native jealousy as well as delicacy of his temper appears in those passages in which he addresses the eulogium of Beatrice to the Florentine ladies and her young companions.†

* It borrows even the solemn language of Sacred Writ to express its intensity:

Nelle man vostre, o dolce donna mia!
Raccomando lo spirito che muore. Son. 34.

† I refer particularly to that sublime Canzone addressed to the ladies of Florence, and beginning,

"Donne ch'avete intelletto d' amore."

Those of his own sex, as he assures us, were not worthy to listen to her praises; or must perforce have become enamoured of this picture of female excellence, the fear of which made a coward of him--

> Ma tratterò del suo stato gentile
> Donne e donzelle amorose, con vui;
> Che non è cosa da parlarne altrui.

Among the young companions of Beatrice, Dante particularly distinguishes one, who appears to have been her chosen friend, and who, on account of her singular and blooming beauty, was called, at Florence, Primavera, (the Spring.) Her real name was Giovanna. Dante frequently names them together, and in particular in that exquisitely fanciful sonnet to his friend Guido Cavalcanti; where he addresses them by those familiar and endearing diminutives, so peculiarly Italian—

E Monna Vanna e Monna Bice poi.*

* Monna Vanna, for *Madonna Giovanna;* and Monna Bice, *Madonna Beatrice.*

This famous sonnet has been translated by Hayley and by Shelley. I subjoin the version of the latter, as truer to the spirit of the original.

THE WISH.—TO GUIDO CAVALCANTI.

Guido! I would that Lapo, thou, and I,
Led by some strong enchantment might ascend
A magic ship, whose charmed sails should fly
With winds at will, where'er our thoughts might wend:
And that no change, nor any evil chance
Should mar our joyous voyage; but it might be

It appears from the 7th and 8th Sonnets of the Vita Nuova, that in the early part of their intercourse, Beatrice, indulging her girlish vivacity, smiled to see her lover utterly discountenanced in her presence, and pointed out her triumph to her companions. This offence seems to have deeply affected the proud, susceptible mind of Dante: it was under the influence of some such morose feeling, probably on this very occasion, that his dark passions burst forth in the bitter lines beginning,

> Io maledico il di ch 'io vidi imprima
> La luce de' vostri occhi traditori.

"I curse the day in which I first beheld the splendor of those traitor eyes," &c. This angry sonnet forms a fine characteristic contrast with that eloquent and impassioned effusion of Petrarch, in which he multiplies blessings on the day, the hour, the minute, the season, and the spot, in which he first beheld Laura—

> Benedetto sia l' giorno, e 'l mese, e l' anno, &c.

This fit of indignation was, however, short-lived. Every tender emotion of Dante's feeling heart

> That even satiety should still enhance
> Between our hearts their strict community.
> And that the bounteous wizard there would place
> Vanna and Bice, and thy gentle love,
> Companions of our wanderings, and would grace
> With passionate talk, wherever we might rove
> Our time!—and each were as content and free
> As I believe that thou and I should be!

seems to have been called forth when Beatrice lost her excellent father. Folco Portinari died in 1289; and the description we have of the inconsolable grief of Beatrice and the sympathy of her young companions,—so poetically, so delicately touched by her lover,—impress us with a high idea of both her filial tenderness and the general amiability of her disposition, which rendered her thus beloved. In the 12th and 13th Sonnets, we have, perhaps, one of the most beautiful groups ever presented in poetry. Dante meets a company of young Florentine ladies, who were returning from paying Beatrice a visit of condolence on the death of her father. Their altered and dejected looks, their downcast eyes, and cheeks "colorless as marble," make his heart tremble within him; he asks after Beatrice—"*our* gentle lady," as he tenderly expresses it: the young girls raise their downcast eyes, and regard him with surprise. "Art thou he," they exclaim, "who hast so often sung to us the praises of our Beatrice? the voice, indeed, is his; but, oh! how changed the aspect! Thou weepest!—why shouldest *thou* weep?—thou hast not seen *her* tears;—leave *us* to weep and return to our home, refusing comfort; for we, indeed, have heard her speak, and seen her dissolved in grief; so changed is her lovely face by sorrow, that to look upon her is enough to make one die at her feet for pity.*

It should seem that the extreme affliction of

* Sonnetto 13 (Poesie della Vita Nuova.)

Beatrice for the loss of her father, acting on a delicate constitution, hastened her own end, for she died within a few months afterwards, in her 24th year. In the "Vita Nuova" there is a fragment of a Canzone, which breaks off at the end of the first strophe; and annexed to it is the following affecting note, originally in the handwriting of Dante.

"I was engaged in the composition of this Canzone, and had completed only the above stanza, when it pleased the God of justice to call unto himself this gentlest of human beings; that she might be glorified under the auspices of that blessed Queen, the Virgin Maria, whose name was ever held in especial reverence by my sainted Beatrice."

Boccaccio, who knew Dante personally, tells us, that on the death of Beatrice, he was so changed by affliction that his best friends could scarcely recognize him. He scarcely ate or slept; he neglected his person, until he became "una cosa selvatica a vedere," *a savage thing to the eye:* to borrow his own strong expression, he seems to have been "grief-stung to madness." To the first Canzone, written after the death of Beatrice, Dante has prefixed a note, in which he tells us, that after he had long wept in silence the loss of her he loved, he thought to give utterance to his sorrow in words; and to compose a Canzone, in which he should write, (weeping as he wrote,) of the virtues of her who, through much anguish, had

bowed his soul to the earth. "Then," he says, "I thus began:—gli occhi dolenti,"—which are the first words of this Canzone. It is addressed, like the others, to her female companions, whom alone he thought worthy to listen to her praises, and whose gentle hearts could alone sympathize in his grief.

Non vo parlare altrui
Se non a cor gentil, che 'n donna sia!

One stanza of this Canzone is unequalled, I think, for a simplicity at once tender and sublime. The sentiment, or rather the meaning, in homely English phrase, would run thus:—

"Ascended is our Beatrice to the highest heaven, to those realms where angels dwell in peace; and you, her fair companions, and Love and me, she has left, alas! behind. It was not the frost of winter that chilled her, nor was it the heat of summer that withered her; it was the power of her virtue, her humility and her truth, that ascended into heaven, moved the ETERNAL FATHER to call her to himself, seeing that this miserable life was not worthy of any thing so fair, so excellent!"

On the anniversary of the death of Beatrice, Dante tells us that he was sitting alone, thinking upon her, and tracing, as he meditated, the figure of an angel on his tablets.* Can any one doubt that this little incident, so natural and so affecting, —his thinking on his lost Beatrice, and by associa-

* Vita Nuova, p. 268.

tion sketching the figure of an angel, while his mind dwelt upon her removal to a brighter and better world,—must have been real? It gave rise to the 18th Sonnet of the Vita Nuova, which he calls "Il doloroso annovale," (the mournful anniversary.)

Another little circumstance, not less affecting, he has beautifully commemorated in two Sonnets, which follow the one last mentioned. They are addressed to some kind and gentle creature, who from a window beheld Dante abandon himself, with fearful vehemence, to the agony of his feelings, when he believed no human eye was on him. "She turned pale," he says, "with compassion; her eyes filled with tears, as if she had loved me: then did I remember my noble-hearted Beatrice, for even thus she often looked upon me," &c. And he confesses that the grateful, yet mournful pleasure with which he met the pitying look of this fair being, excited remorse in his heart, that he should be able to derive pleasure from any thing.

Dante concludes the collection of his *Rime*, (his miscellaneous poems on the subject of his early love,) with this remarkable note:—

"I beheld a marvellous vision which has caused me to cease from writing in praise of my blessed Beatrice, until I can celebrate her more worthily; which that I may do, I devote my whole soul to study, as *she* knoweth well; in so much, that if it please the Great Disposer of all things to prolong

my life for a few years upon this earth, I hope hereafter to sing of my Beatrice what never yet was said or sung of woman."

And in this transport of enthusiasm, Dante conceived the idea of his great poem, of which Beatrice was destined to be the heroine. It was to no Muse, called by fancy from her fabled heights, and feigned at the poet's will; it was not to ambition of fame, nor literary leisure seeking a vent for overflowing thoughts; nor to the wish to aggrandize himself, or to flatter the pride of a patron;—but to the inspiration of a young, beautiful, and noble-minded woman, we owe one of the grandest efforts of human genius. And never did it enter into the imagination of any lover, before or since, to raise so mighty, so vast, so enduring, so glorious a monument to the worth and charms of a mistress. Other poets were satisfied if they conferred on the object of their love an immortality on earth: Dante was not content till he had placed *his* on a throne in the Empyreum, above choirs of angels, in presence of the very fountain of glory; her brow wreathed with eternal beams, and clothed with the ineffable splendors of beatitude;—an apotheosis, compared to which, all others are earthly and poor indeed.

CHAPTER IX.

DANTE AND BEATRICE.

CONTINUED.

THROUGH the two parts of the Divina Commedia, (Hell and Purgatory,) Beatrice is merely announced to the reader—she does not appear in person; for what should the sinless and sanctified spirit of Beatrice do in those abodes of eternal anguish and expiatory torment? Her appearance, however, in due time and place, is prepared and shadowed forth in many beautiful allusions: for instance, it is she who descending from the empyreal height, sends Virgil to be the deliverer of Dante in the mysterious forest, and his guide through the abysses of torment.

> Io son Beatrice che ti faccia andare;
> Vegno di loco ove tornar disio:
> Amor mi mosse che mi fa parlare.
>
> INFERNO, C. 2.

> "I who now bid thee on this errand forth
> Am Beatrice; from a place I come
> Revisited with joy; love brought me thence,
> Who prompts my speech."
>
> CAREY'S TRANS.

And she is *indicated*, as it were, several times in the course of the poem, in a manner which pre-

pares us for the sublimity with which she is at length introduced, in all the majesty of a superior nature, all the dreamy splendor of an ideal presence, and all the melancholy charm of a beloved and lamented reality. When Dante has left the confines of Purgatory, a wondrous chariot approaches from afar, surrounded by a flight of angelic beings, and veiled in a cloud of flowers (" un nuvola di fiori," is the beautiful expression.)—A female form is at length apparent in the midst of this angelic pomp, seated in the car, and "robed in hues of living flame;" she is veiled: he cannot discern her features, but there moves a hidden virtue from her,

> At whose touch
> The power of ancient love was strong within him.

He recognizes the influence which even in his childish days had smote him—

> Che già m' avea trafitto
> Prima ch' io fuor della puerizia fosse;

and his failing heart and quivering frame confess the thrilling presence of his Beatrice—

> Conosco i segni dell' antica fiamma!

The whole passage is as beautifully wrought as it is feelingly and truly conceived.

Beatrice,—no longer the soft, frail and feminine being he had known and loved upon earth, but an admonishing spirit,—rises up in her chariot,

> And with a mien
> Of that stern majesty which doth surround
> A mother's presence to her awe-struck child,
> She looked—a flavor of such bitterness
> Was mingled with her pity!
> CAREY'S TRANS.

Dante then puts into her mouth the most severe yet eloquent accusation against himself: while he stands weeping by, bowed down by shame and anguish. She accuses him before the listening angels for his neglected time, his wasted talents, his forgetfulness of her, when she was no longer upon earth to lead him with the light of her "youthful eye," (gli occhi giovinetti.)

> Soon as I had changed
> My mortal for immortal, then he left me,
> And gave himself to others; when from flesh
> To spirit I had risen, and increase
> Of beauty and virtue circled me,
> I was less dear to him and valued less!
> PURGATORY, C. 30.—CAREY'S TRANS.

This praise of herself and stern upbraiding of her lover, would sound harsh from woman's lips, but have a solemnity, and even a sublimity, as uttered by a disembodied and angelic being. When Dante, weeping, falters out a faint excuse—

> Thy fair looks withdrawn,
> Things present with deceitful pleasures turned
> My steps aside,—

she answers by reproaching him with his inconstancy to her memory:—

Never didst thou spy
In art or nature aught so passing sweet
As were the limbs that in their beauteous frame
Enclosed me, and are scattered now in dust.
If sweetest thing thus failed thee with my death,
What afterward of mortal should thy wish
Have tempted? PURGATORY, C. 31.

And she rebukes him, for that he could stoop from the memory of her love to be the thrall of a *slight girl.* This last expression is supposed to allude either to Dante's unfortunate marriage with Gemma Donati,* or to the attachment he formed during his exile for a beautiful Lucchese named Gentucca, the subject of several of his poems. But, notwithstanding all this severity of censure, Dante gazing on his divine monitress, is so rapt by her loveliness, his eyes so eager to recompense themselves for "their ten years' thirst," (Beatrice had been dead ten years,) that not being yet freed from the stain of his earthly nature, he is warned not to gaze "too fixedly" on her charms. After a farther probation, Beatrice introduces him into the various spheres which compose the celestial paradise; and thenceforward she certainly assumes the characteristics of an allegorical being. The true distinction seems this, that Dante has not represented Divine Wisdom under the name and form of Beatrice, but

* This marriage was one of policy, and negotiated by the friends of Dante and of Gemma Donati: her temper was violent and harsh, and their domestic peace was, probably, not increased by Dante's obstinate regret for his first love.

the more to exalt his Beatrice, he has clothed her in the attributes of Divine Wisdom.

She at length ascends with him into the Heaven of Heavens, to the source of eternal and uncreated light, without shadow and without bound; and when Dante looks round for her, he finds she has quitted his side, and has taken her place throned among the supreme blessed, "as far above him as the region of thunder is above the centre of the sea;" he gazes up at her in a rapture of love and devotion, and in a sublime apostrophe invokes her still to continue her favor towards him. She looks down upon him from her effulgent height, smiles on him with celestial sweetness, and then fixing her eyes on the eternal fountain of glory, is absorbed in ecstasy. Here we leave her; the poet had touched the limits of permitted thought; the seraph wings of imagination, borne upwards by the inspiration of deep love, could no higher soar,—the audacity of genius could dare no farther!

* * * * *

Dante died at Ravenna in 1321, and was sumptuously interred at the cost of Guido da Polenta, the father of that unfortunate Francesca di Rimini, whose story he has so exquisitely told in the fifth canto of the Inferno. He left several sons and an only daughter, whom he had named Beatrice, in remembrance of his early love: she became a nun at Ravenna.

Now where, in the name of all truth and all feeling, were the heads, or rather the hearts, of

those commentators, who could see nothing in the Beatrice thus beautifully portrayed, thus tenderly lamented, and thus sublimely commemorated, but a mere allegorical personage, the creation of a poet's fancy? Nothing can come of nothing; and it was no unreal or imaginary being who turned the course of Dante's ardent passions and active spirit, and burning enthusiasm, into one sweeping torrent of love and poetry, and gave to Italy and to the world the Divina Commedia!

CHAPTER X.

CHAUCER AND PHILIPPA PICARD.

After Italy, England,—who has ever trod in her footsteps, and at length outstripped her in the race of intellect,—was the next to produce a great and prevailing genius in poetry, a master spirit, whom no change of customs, manners, or language can render wholly obsolete; and who was destined, like the rest of his tribe, to bow before the influence of woman, to toil in her praise, and soar by her inspiration.

Seven years after the death of Dante, Chaucer was born, and he was twenty-four years younger than Petrarch, whom he met at Padua in 1373;

this meeting between the two great poets was memorable in itself, and yet more interesting for having first introduced into the English language that beautiful monument to the virtue of women,—the story of Griselda.

Boccaccio had lately sent to his friend the MS. of the Decamerone, of which it is the concluding tale: the tender fancy of Petrarch, refined by a forty years' attachment to a gentle and elegant female, passed over what was vicious and blamable, or only recommended by the wit and the style, and fixed with delight on the tale of Griselda; so beautiful in itself, and so honorable to the sex whom he had poetically deified in the person of one lovely woman. He amused his leisure hours in translating it into Latin, and having finished his version, he placed it in the hands of a citizen of Padua, and desired him to read it aloud. His friend accordingly began; but as he proceeded, the overpowering pathos of the story so affected him, that he was obliged to stop; he began again, but was unable to proceed; the gathering tears blinded him, and choked his voice, and he threw down the manuscript. This incident, which Petrarch himself relates in a letter to Boccaccio, occurred about the period when Chaucer passed from Genoa to Padua to visit the poet and lover of Laura—

Quel grande, alla cui fama angusto è il mondo.

Petrarch must have regarded the English poet with that wondering, enthusiastic admiration with

which we should now hail a Milton or a Shakspeare sprung from Otaheite or Nova Zembla; and his heart and soul being naturally occupied by his latest work, he repeated the experiment he had before tried on his Paduan friend. The impression which the Griselda produced upon the vivid, susceptible imagination of Chaucer, may be judged from his own beautiful version of it in the Canterbury Tales; where the barbarity and improbability of the incidents are so redeemed by the pervading truth and purity and tenderness of the sentiment, that I suppose it never was perused for the first time without tears. Chaucer, as if proud of his interview with Petrarch, and anxious to publish it, is careful to tell us that he did not derive the story from Boccaccio, but that it was

> Learned at Padua of a worthy clerk,
> As proved by his wordes and his work;
> Francis Petrark, the Laureat Poete;

which is also proved by internal evidence.

Chaucer so far resembled Petrarch, that, like him, he was at once poet, scholar, courtier, statesman, philosopher, and man of the world; but considered merely as poets, they were the very antipodes of each other. The genius of Dante has been compared to a Gothic cathedral, vast and lofty, and dark and irregular. In the same spirit, Petrarch may be likened to a classical and elegant Greek temple, rising aloft in its fair and faultless proportions, and compacted of the purest Parian

marble; while Chaucer is like the far-spreading and picturesque palace of the Alhambra, with its hundred chambers, all variously decorated, and rich with barbaric pomp and gold: he is famed rather as the animated painter of character, and manners, and external nature, than the poet of love and sentiment; and yet no writer, Shakspeare always excepted, (and perhaps Spenser) contains so many beautiful and tender passages relating to, or inspired by women. He lived, it is true, in rude times, strangely deficient in good taste and decorum; but when all the institutions of chivalry, under the most chivalrous of our kings and princes,* were at their height in England. As a poet, Chaucer was enlisted into the service of three of the most illustrious, most beautiful, and most accomplished women of that age—Philippa, the high-hearted and generous Queen of Edward the Third; the Lady Blanche of Lancaster, first wife of John of Gaunt; and the lovely Anne of Bohemia, the Queen of Richard the Second;† for whom, and at whose command, he wrote his "Legende of Gode

* Edward III. and the Black Prince.

† She was popularly distinguished as the "*good* Queen Anne," and as dear to her husband as to her people. Richard, who with many and fatal faults, really possessed sensibility and strong domestic affections with which Shakspeare has so finely portrayed him, was passionately devoted to his amiable wife. She died young, at the Palace of Sheen; and when Richard afterwards visited the scene of his loss, he solemnly cursed it in his anguish, and commanded it to be razed to the ground, which was done. One of our kings afterwards rebuilt it. I think Henry the Seventh.

Woman," as some amends for the scandal he had spoken of us in other places. The Countess of Essex, the Countess of Pembroke, and that beautiful Lady Salisbury, the ancestress of the Montagu family, whose famous mischance gave rise to the Order of the Garter, were also among Chaucer's patronesses. But the most distinguished of all, and the favorite subject of his poetry, was the Duchess Blanche. The manner in which he has contrived to celebrate his own loves and individual feelings with those of Blanche and her royal suitor, has given additional interest to both, and has enabled his commentators to fix with tolerable certainty the name and rank of the object of his love, as well as the date and circumstances of his attachment.

In the earliest of Chaucer's poems, "THE COURT OF LOVE," he describes himself as enamoured of a fair mistress, whom, in the style of the time, he calls Rosial, and himself Philogenet: the lady is described as "sprung of noble race and high," with "angel visage," "golden hair," and eyes orient and bright, with figure, "sharply slender,"

So that from the head unto the foot all is sweet womanhead,

and arrayed in a vest of green, with her tresses braided with silk and gold. She treats him at first with disdain, and the Poet swoons away at her feet: satisfied by this convincing proof of his sincerity, she is induced to accept his homage, and

becomes his "liege ladye," and the sovereign of his thoughts. In this poem, which is extremely wild, and has come down to us in an imperfect state, Chaucer quaintly admonishes all lovers, that an absolute faith in the perfection of their mistresses, and obedience to her slightest caprice, are among the first duties; that they must in all cases believe their ladye faultless; that,

> In every thing she doth but as she should.
> Construe the best, believe no tales new,
> For many a lie is told that seem'th full true;
> But think that she, so bounteous and so fair,
> Could not be false; imagine this alway.
> * * * *
> And tho' thou seest a fault right at thine eye,
> Excuse it quick, and glose it prettily.*

Nor are they to presume on their own worthiness, nor to imagine it possible they can earn

> By right, her mercie, nor of equity,
> But of her grace and womanly pitye.†

There is, however, no authority for supposing that at the time this poem was written, Chaucer really aspired to the hand of any lady of superior birth, or was very seriously in love; he was then about nineteen, and had probably selected some fair one, according to the custom of his age, to be his "fancy's queen," and in the same spirit of po-

* Court of Love, v. 369–412. † Ibid.

etical gallantry, he writes to do her honor; he says himself,

> My intent and all my busie care
> Is for to write this treatise as I can,
> Unto my ladye, stable, true, and sure;
> Faithful and kind sith firste that she began
> Me to accept in service as her man;
> To her be all the pleasures of this book,
> That, when her like, she may it rede and look.*

Mixed up with all this gallantry and refinement are some passages inconceivably absurd and gross; but such were those times,—at once rude and magnificent—an odd mixture of cloth of frieze and cloth of gold!

The "Parliament of Birds," entitled in many editions, the "*Assembly of Fowls*," celebrates allegorically the courtship of John of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster.

Blanche, as the greatest heiress of England, with a duchy for her portion, could not fail to be surrounded by pretenders to her hand; but after a year of probation, she decided in favor of John of Gaunt, who thus became Duke of Lancaster in right of his bride. This youthful and princely pair were then about nineteen.

The "Parliament of Birds" being written in 1358, when Blanche had postponed her choice for a year, has fixed the date of Chaucer's attachment to the lady he afterwards married; for here he

* Court of Love, v. 33-42.

describes himself as one who had not yet felt the full power of love—

> For albeit that I know not love indeed,
> Ne wot how that he quitteth folks their hire,
> Yet happeth me full oft in books to read
> Of his miracles.———

But the time was come when the poet, now in his thirty-second year, was destined to feel that a strong attachment for a deserving object—for one who will not be obtained unsought, "was no sport," as he expresses it, but

> Smart and sorrow, and great heavinesse.

During the period of trial which Lady Blanche had inflicted on her lover, it was Chaucer's fate to fall in love in sad earnest.—The object of this passion, too beautifully and unaffectedly described not to be genuine, was Philippa Picard de Rouet, the daughter of a knight of Hainault, and a favorite attendant of Queen Philippa. Her elder sister Catherine, was at the same time maid of honor to the Duchess Blanche. Both these sisters were distinguished at Court for their beauty and accomplishments, and were the friends and companions of the Princesses they served: and both are singularly interesting from their connection, political and poetical, with English history and literature.

Philippa Picard is one of the principal personages in the poem entitled "Chaucer's Dream,"

which is a kind of epithalamium celebrating the marriage of John of Gaunt with the Lady Blanche, which took place at Reading, May 19, 1359. It is a wild fanciful vision of fairy-land and enchantments, of which I cannot attempt to give an analysis. In the opening lines, written about twelve months after the "Parliament of Birds," we find Chaucer in deep love, according to all its forms. He is lying awake,

> About such hour as lovers weep
> And cry after their lady's grace,

thinking on his mistress—all her goodness and all her sweetness, and marvelling how heaven had formed her so exceeding fair,

> And in so litel space
> Made such a body and such a face;
> So great beauty, and such features,
> More than be in other creatures!

He falls into a dream as usual, and in the conclusion fancies himself present at the splendid festivities which took place at the marriage of his patron. The ladye of his affection is described as the beloved friend and companion of the bride. She is sent to grace the marriage ceremony with her presence; and Chaucer seizes the occasion to plead his suit for love and mercy. Then the Prince, the Queen, and all the rest of the Court, unite in conjuring the lady to have pity on his

pain, and recompense his truth! she smiles, and with a pretty hesitation at last consents.

> Sith his will and yours are one,
> Contrary in me shall be none.

They are married: the ladies and the knights wish them

> ——— Heart's pleasance,
> In joy and health continuance!

The minstrels strike up,—the multitude send forth a shout; and in the midst of these joyous and triumphant sounds, and in the troubled exultation of his own heart, the sleeper bounds from his couch,—

> Wening to have been at the feast,

and wakes to find it all a dream. He looks around for the gorgeous marriage-feast, and instead of the throng of knights and ladies gay, he sees nothing but the figures staring at him from the tapestry.

> On the walls old portraiture
> Of horsemen, of hawks and hounds,
> And hurt deer all full of wounds;
> Some like torn, some hurt with shot;
> And as my dream was, *that* was not! *

He is plunged in grief to find himself thus reft of all his visionary joys, and prays to sleep again,

* *i. e.* the tapestry, like my dream, was a representation, not a reality.

and dream thus for aye, or at least "a thousand years and ten."

> Lo, here my bliss!—lo, here my pain!
> Which to my ladye I complain,
> And grace and mercy of her requere,
> To end my woe and all my fear;
> And me accept for her service—
> That of my dream, the substance
> Might turnen, once, to cognizance.*

And the whole concludes with a very tender "envoi," expressly addressed to Philippa, although the poem was written in honor of his patrons, the Duke and Duchess. It has been well observed, that nothing can be more delicate and ingenious than the manner in which Chaucer has complimented his mistress, and ventured to shadow forth his own hopes and desires; confessing, at the same time, that they were built on air and ended in a dream: it may be added, that nothing can be more picturesque and beautiful, and vigorous, than some of the descriptive parts of this poem.

There is no reason to suppose that Philippa was absolutely deaf to the suit, or insensible to the fame and talents of her poet-lover. The delay which took place was from a cause honorable to her char-

* Chaucer's Dreame, v. 2185. "Here also is showed Chaucer's match with a certain gentlewoman, who was so well liked and loved of the Lady Blanche and her Lord, (as Chaucer himself also was,) that gladly they concluded a marriage between them."—*Arguments to Chaucer's Works*, Edit. 1597.

acter and her heart; it arose from the declining health of her royal mistress, to whom she was most strongly and gratefully attached, and whose noble qualities deserved all her affection. It appears, from a comparison of dates, that Chaucer endured a suspense of more than nine years, during which he was a constant and fervent suitor of his ladye's grace. In this interval he translated the Romaunt of the Rose, the most famous poetical work of the middle ages. He addressed it to his mistress: and it is remarkable that a very elaborate and cynical satire on women, which occurs in the original French, is entirely omitted by Chaucer in his version; perhaps because it would have been a profanation to her who then ruled his heart; on other occasions he showed no such forbearance.

In the year 1369, Chaucer lost his amiable patroness, the Duchess Blanche; she died in her thirtieth year; he lamented her death in a long poem, entitled the "Booke of the Duchesse." The truth of the story, the virtues, the charms, and the youth of the Princess, the grief of her husband, and the simplicity and beauty of many passages, render this one of the most interesting and striking of all Chaucer's works.

The description of Blanche, in the "Booke of the Duchesse," shows how trifling is the difference between a perfect female character in the thirteenth century, and what would now be considered as such. It is a very lively and animated picture. Her golden hair and laughing eyes; her skill in

dancing, and her sweet carolling; her "goodly and friendly speech;" her debonair looks; her gayety that was still "so womanly;" her indifference to general admiration; her countenance, "that was so simple and so benigne," contrasted with her high-spirited modesty and consciousness of lofty birth,

> No living wight might do her shame,
> *She loved so well her own name.*

her disdain of that coquetry which holds men "in balance,"

> By half word or by countenance;

her wit, "without malice, and ever set upon gladnesse;" and her goodness, which the Poet with a nice discrimination of female virtue, distinguishes from mere ignorance of evil—for though in all her actions was perfect innocence, he adds,

> I say not that she had no knowing
> What harm was; for, else, she
> Had known no good—so thinketh me;

are all beautifully and happily set forth, and are charms so appropriate to woman, as *woman*, that no change of fashion or lapse of ages can alter their effect. Time

> "Can draw no lines there with his antique pen."

But afterwards follows a trait peculiarly characteristic of the women of that chivalrous period. She was not, says Chaucer, one of those ladies who send their lovers off

> To Walachie,
> To Prussia, and to Tartary,
> To Alexandria, ne Turkie;

and on other bootless errands, by way of displaying their power.

> She used no such *knacks small.*

That is, she was superior to such frivolous tricks.

John of Gaunt, who is the principal speaker and chief mourner in the poem, gives a history of his courtship, and tells with what mixture of fear and awe, he then "right young," approached the lovely heiress of Lancaster: but bethinking him that Heaven could never have formed in any creature so great beauty and bounty "withouten mercie,"—in that hope he makes his confession of love, and he goes on to tell us, with exquisite *naïveté*,—

> I wot not well how I began,
> Full evil rehearse it, I can:
> * * * * *
> For many a word I overskipt
> In telling my tale—for pure fear,
> Lest that my words misconstrued were.
> Softly, and quaking for pure dred,
> And shame,—
> Full oft I wax'd both pale and red;
> I durst not once look her on,
> For wit, manner, and all was gone;
> I said, "Mercie, sweet!"—and no more.

Then his anguish at her first rejection, and his rapture when, at last, he wins from his lady

The noble gift of her mercie;

his domestic happiness—his loss, and his regrets, are all told with the same truth, simplicity, and profound feeling. For such passages and such pictures as these, Chaucer will still be read, triumphant as the poet of nature, over the rust and dust of ages, and all the difficulties of antique style and obsolete spelling; which last, however, though repulsive, is only a difficulty to the eye, and easily overcome.

To return to Chaucer's own love. In the opening lines of the "Booke of the Duchesse," he describes himself as wasted with his "eight years' sicknesse," alluding to his long courtship of the coy Philippa:

I have great wonder, by this light,
How that I live !—for day nor night
I may not sleepen well-nigh nought:
I have so many an idle thought
Purely for the default of sleep;
That, by my troth, I take no keep
Of nothing—how it com'th or go'th,
To me is nothing liefe or lothe; *
All is equal good to me,
Joy or sorrow—whereso it be;
For I have feeling in no thing
But am, as 'twere, a mazed † thing,

* To me there is nothing dear or hateful, every thing is indifferent.

† *Mazed*,—distracted.

All day in point to fall adown
For sorrowful imagination, &c.

In the same year with the Duchess died the good Queen of Edward the Third; and Philippa Picard being thus sadly released from her attendance on her mistress, a few months afterwards married Chaucer, then in his forty-second year.

In consequence of her good service, Philippa had a pension for her life; and I regret that little more is known concerning her: but it should seem that she was a good and tender wife, and that long years of wedded life did not weaken her husband's attachment for her; for she accompanied Chaucer when he was exiled, about fifteen years after his marriage, though every motive of prudence and selfishness, on both sides, would then have induced a separation.* Neither was the poet likely to be easily satisfied on the score of conjugal obedience; he was rather *exigeant* and despotic, if we may trust his own description of a perfect wife. The chivalrous and poetical lover was the slave of his mistress; but once married, it is all *vice versâ*.

She saith not once *nay*, when he saith *yea*,
"Do this," saith he, "all ready, Sir," saith she!

The precise date of Philippa's death is not known, but it took place some years before that of her husband. Their residence at the time of their marriage, was a small stone building, near the entrance of Woodstock Park; it had been given to

* Godwin's Life of Chaucer, v. iii. p. 5.

Chaucer by Edward the Third; afterwards they resided principally at Donnington Castle, that fine and striking ruin, which must be remembered by all who have travelled the Newberry road. In the domain attached to this castle were three oaks, of remarkable size and beauty, to which Chaucer gave the names of the Queen's oak, the King's oak, and Chaucer's oak; these venerable trees were felled in Evelyn's time, and are commemorated in his Sylva, as among the noblest of their species.

Philippa's eldest son, Thomas Chaucer, had a daughter, Alice, who became the wife of William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, the famous favorite of Margaret of Anjou. The grandson of Alice Chaucer, by the Duke of Suffolk, John, Earl of Lincoln, was declared heir to the Crown by Richard the Third;* and had the issue of the battle of Bosworth been different, would undoubtedly have ascended the throne of England;—as it was, the lineage of Chaucer was extinguished on a scaffold.

The fate of Catherine Picard de Rouet, the sister of Chaucer's wife was still more remarkable,—she was destined to be the mother of a line of kings.

She had been *domicella*, or maid of honor, to the Duchess Blanche, after whose death, the infant children of the Princess were committed to her care.† In this situation she won the heart of their

* In right of his mother, Elizabeth Plantagenet, eldest sister of Edward IV.

† These were Henry of Lancaster, afterwards Henry IV., Philippa, Queen of Portugal, and Elizabeth, Duchess of Exeter.

father, the Duke of Lancaster, who, on the death of his second wife, Constance of Castile, married Catherine, and his children by her were solemnly legitimatized. The conduct of Catherine, except in one instance, had been irreproachable: her humility, her prudence, and her various accomplishments, not only reconciled the royal family and the people to her marriage, but added lustre to her rank: and when Richard the Second married Isabella of France, the young Queen, then only nine years old, was placed under the especial care and tuition of the Duchess of Lancaster.

One of the granddaughters of Catherine, Lady Jane Beaufort, had the singular fortune of becoming at once the inspiration and the love of a great poet, the queen of an accomplished monarch, and the common ancestress of all the sovereigns of England since the days of Elizabeth.*

Never, perhaps, was the influence of woman on a poetic temperament more beautifully illustrated, than in the story of James the First of Scotland, and Lady Jane Beaufort. It has been so elegantly told by Washington Irving in the Sketch-Book, that it is only necessary to refer to it.—James, while a prisoner, was confined in Windsor Castle,

* Catherine, Duchess of Lancaster, had three sons: the second was the famous Cardinal Beaufort; the eldest (created Earl of Somerset) was grandfather to Henry the Seventh, and consequently ancestor to the whole race of Tudor: thus from the sister of Chaucer's wife are descended all the English sovereigns, from the fifteenth century; and likewise the present family of Somerset, Dukes of Beaufort.

and immediately under his window there was a fair garden, in which the Lady Jane was accustomed to walk with her attendants, distinguished above them all by her beauty and dignity, even more than her state and the richness of her attire. The young monarch beheld her accidentally, his imagination was fired, his heart captivated, and from that moment his prison was no longer a dungeon, but a palace of light and love. As he was the best poet and musician of his time, he composed songs in her praise, set them to music, and sang them to his lute. He also wrote the history of his love, with all its circumstances, in a long poem * still extant; and though the language be now obsolete, it is described by those who have studied it, as not only full of beauties both of sentiment and expression, but unpolluted by a single thought or allusion which the most refined age, or the most fastidious delicacy could reject;—a singular distinction, when we consider that James's only models must have been Gower and Chaucer, to whom no such praise is due: we must rather suppose that he was no imitator, but that he owed his inspiration to modest and queenly beauty, and to the genuine tenderness of his own heart. His description of the fair apparition who came to bless his solitary hours, is so minute and peculiar, that it must have been drawn from the life;—the net of pearls, in which her light tresses were gathered up; the chain of fine-wrought gold about her neck; the heart-shaped

* "The King's Quhair," (i. e. *cahier* or book.)

ruby suspended from it, which glowed on her snowy bosom like a spark of fire; her white vest looped up to facilitate her movements; her graceful damsels who followed at a respectful distance; and her little dog gambolling round with her with its collar of silver bells,—these, and other picturesque circumstances, were all noted in the lover's memory, and have been recorded by the poet's verse. And he sums up her perfections thus:—

> In her was youth, beauty, and numble port,
> Bountee, richesse, and womanly feature.
> God better knows than my pen can report,
> Wisdom, largesse,* estate,† and cunning ‡ sure:
> In every point so guided her measure,
> In word, in deed, in shape, in countenance,
> That nature could no more her child advance.

The account of his own feelings as she disappears from his charmed gaze,—his lingering at the window of his tower, till Phœbus

> Had bid farewell to every leaf and flower,—

then resting his head pensively on the cold stone, and the vision which steals upon his half-waking, half-dreaming fancy, and shadows forth the happy issue of his love,—are all conceived in the most lively manner. It is judged from internal evidence, that this poem must have been finished after his marriage, since he intimates that he is blessed in the possession of her he loved, and that the fair vision of the solitary dungeon is realized.

* Liberality. † Dignity. ‡ Knowledge and discretion.

When the King of Scots was released, he wooed and won openly, and as a monarch, the woman he had adored in secret. The marriage was solemnized in 1423, and he carried Lady Jane to Scotland where she was crowned soon after his bride and queen.

How well she merited, and how deeply she repaid the love of her devoted and all-accomplished husband, is told in history. When James was surprised and murdered by some of his factious barons, his queen threw herself between him and the daggers of the assassins, received many of the wounds aimed at his heart, nor could they complete their purpose till they had dragged her by force from his arms. She deserved to be a poet's queen and love! These are the souls, the deeds which inspire poetry,—or rather which are themselves poetry, its principle and its essence. It was on this occasion that Catharine Douglas, one of the queen's attendants, thrust her arm into the stanchion of the door to serve the purpose of a bolt, and held it there till the savage assailants forced their way by shattering the frail defence. What times were those!—alas! the love of women, and the barbarity of men!

CHAPTER XI.

LORENZO DE' MEDICI AND LUCRETIA DONATI.

To Lorenzo de' Medici,—or rather to the pre-eminence his personal qualities, his family possessions, and his unequalled talents, gave him over his countrymen,—some late travellers and politicians have attributed the downfall of the liberties of Florence, and attacked his memory as the precursor of tyrants and the preparer of slaves. It may be so:—yet was it the fault of Lorenzo, if his collateral posterity afterwards became the oppressors of that State of which he was the family and the saviour? And since in this world some must command and some obey, what power is so legitimate as that derived from the influence of superior virtue and talent? from the employ of riches obtained by honorable industry, and expended with princely munificence, and subscribed to by the will and the affections of the people?

But I forget:—these are questions foreign to our subject. Politics I never could understand in my life, and history I have forgotten,—or would wish to forget,—perplexed by its conflicting evidence, and shocked by its interminable tissue of horrors. Let others then scale the height while we gather flowers at the foot; let others explore the mazes of the forest; ours be rather

The gay parterre, the checkered shade,
The morning bower, the evening colonnade,
Those soft recesses of uneasy minds,

whence the din of doleful war, the rumor of cruelty and suffering, and all the "fitful stir unprofitable" of the world are shut out, and only the beautiful and good, or the graceful and the gay, are admitted. There have been pens enough, Heaven knows, to chronicle the wrongs, the crimes, the sorrows of our sex: why should I add an echo to that voice, which from the beginning has cried aloud in the wilderness of this world, upon women betrayed, and betraying in self-defence? A nobler and more grateful task be mine to show them how much of what is most fair, most excellent, most sublime among the productions of human genius, has been owing to their influence, direct or indirect; and call up the spirits of the dead,—those who from their silent urns still rule the pulses of our hearts—to bear witness to this truth.

* * * * *

It is not, then, Lorenzo the MAGNIFICENT, the statesman, and the chief of a great republic, who finds a place in these pages,—but Lorenzo the lover and the poet, round whose memory hover a thousand bright recollections connected with the revival of arts and literature, and the golden age of Italy. Let politicians say what they will, there is a spell of harmony, there is music in his very name! how softly the vowelled syllables drop from the lips—LORENZO DE' MEDICI!—it even looks

elegant when written. Yes, there is something in the mere sound of a name. I remember once taking up a book, and a very celebrated book, in which, after turning over some of the pages with pleasure, I came to *Peter* and *Laurence Medecis*,—I shut it hastily, as I would have covered my ears to protect them from a sudden discord in music.

Between Petrarch and Lorenzo de' Medici, there occurs not a single great name in Italian poetry. The century seemed to lie fallow, as if preparing for the great birth of various genius which distinguished the succeeding age. The sciences and the classics were chiefly studied, and philosophy and Greek seemed to have banished love and poetry.

In such a state of things, it is rather surprising to find in Lorenzo de' Medici the common case reversed; for by his own confession, it appears that it was not love which made him a poet, but poetry which made him a lover.

Giuliano, the brother of Lorenzo,—he who was afterwards assassinated by the Pazzi, and was so beloved at Florence for his amiable character and personal accomplishments, had been seized with a passion for a lady named Simonetta, who was esteemed the most beautiful woman in Florence, and is scarcely ever mentioned but with the epithet, "La bella Simonetta."—She died in the bloom of early youth, and all the wit and eloquence of her native city were called forth in condolences addressed to Giuliano, or elegies to her memory, in-

prose and verse, Latin, Greek, and Italian. Among the rest, Lorenzo, who had already made several attempts in Italian poetry, pressed forward to celebrate the love and the loss of his amiable brother:—in his zeal to do justice to so dear a subject, he worked himself up into a fit of amorous and poetical enthusiasm which soon found a real and living beauty for its object. But to give this romantic tale its proper effect, it must be related in Lorenzo's own words. He has left us a most circumstantial and elegant as well as interesting and fanciful account of the birth and progress of his poetic passion, and I extract it at length from Mr. Roscoe's translation.

"A young lady of great personal attractions happened to die at Florence; and as she had been very generally admired and beloved, so her death was as generally lamented. Nor was this to be much wondered at; for, independent of her beauty, her manners were so engaging, that almost every person who had any acquaintance with her flattered himself that he had obtained the chief place in her affections." (In other words, this beautiful Simonetta was an exquisite coquette.)

"This fatal event excited the extreme regret of her admirers; and as she was carried to the place of burial, with her face uncovered, those who had known her when living, pressed for a last look at the object of their adoration, and accompanied her funeral with their tears.

"On this occasion, all the eloquence, and all the

wit of Florence were exerted in paying due honors to her memory, both in prose and verse. Amongst the rest, I also composed a few sonnets; and in order to give them greater effect, I endeavored to convince myself, that I too had been deprived of the object of my love, and to excite in my own mind all those passions that might enable me to move the affections of others.—Under the influence of this delusion, I began to think how severe was the fate of those by whom she had been beloved; and from thence was led to consider, whether there was any other lady in this city deserving of such honor and praise, and to imagine the happiness that must be experienced by any one, whose good fortune could procure him such a subject for his pen. I accordingly sought for some time without having the satisfaction of finding any one, who in my judgment was deserving of a sincere and constant attachment. But when I had nearly resigned all expectations of success, chance threw in my way that which had been denied to my most diligent inquiry; as if the God of Love had selected this hopeless period, to give me a more decisive proof of his power. A public festival was held in Florence, to which all that was noble and beautiful in the city resorted. To this I was brought by some of my companions (I suppose as my destiny led) against my will, for I had for some time past avoided such exhibitions; or if at times I attended them, it proceeded rather from a compliance with custom, than from any pleasure I

experienced in them. Among the ladies there assembled, I saw one of such sweet and attractive manners, that while I regarded her, I could not help saying, 'If this person were possessed of the delicacy, the understanding, the accomplishments of her who is so lately dead—most certainly she excels her in the charms of her person.'—

* * * * *

"Resigning myself to my passion, I endeavored to discover, if possible, how far her manners and her conversation agreed with her appearance; and here I found such an assemblage of extraordinary endowments, that it was difficult to say whether she excelled more in person or in mind. Her beauty was, as I have before mentioned, astonishing. She was of a just and proper height. Her complexion extremely fair, but not pale,—blooming but not ruddy. Her countenance was serious, without being severe,—mild and pleasant without levity or vulgarity. Her eyes were lively, without any indication of pride or conceit. Her whole shape was so finely proportioned, that amongst other women she appeared with superior dignity, yet free from the least degree of formality or affectation. In walking, in dancing, or in other exercises which display the person, every motion was elegant and appropriate. Her sentiments were always just and striking, and have furnished materials for some of my sonnets; she always spoke at the proper time, and always to the purpose, so that nothing could be added, nothing taken away. Though her

remarks were often keen and pointed, yet they were so tempered as not to give offence. Her understanding was superior to her sex, but without the appearance of arrogance or presumption; and she avoided an error too common among women, who, when they think themselves sensible, become for the most part insupportable.* To recount all her excellences would far exceed my present limits, and I shall therefore conclude with affirming, that there was nothing which could be desired in a beautiful and an accomplished woman, which was not in her most abundantly found. By these qualities I was so captivated, that not a power or faculty of my body or mind remained any longer at liberty, and I could not help considering the lady who had died, as the star of Venus, which at the approach of the sun is totally overpowered and extinguished."

The real name of this beautiful and accomplished creature, Lorenzo was too discreet to reveal; but from contemporary authors, we learn that she was Lucretia Donati—a noble lady, distinguished at Florence for her virtue and beauty, and of the same illustrious family which had given a wife to Dante.

When Lorenzo undertook to fall in love thus poetically, he was only twenty: the experiment was perilous; and it is not wonderful that this

* Lorenzo tells us in the original, that the ladies who rendered themselves thus insupportable, were called (*vulgarly*) *Saccenti*: —query—vulgarly, *Blue-stockings?*

imaginary passion had at first in his ardent and susceptible mind all the effects of a real one: he neglected society—abandoned himself to musing and solitude—affected the rural shades, and gave up his time, and devoted all his powers, to celebrate, in the richest coloring of poetry, her whom he had selected to be the mistress of his heart, or rather the presiding goddess of his fancy.

The result is exactly what may be imagined, and a proof of the theory on which I insist, that "nothing but what arises from the heart goes to the heart, and that the verse which never quickened a pulse in the bosom of the poet, never awakened a throb in that of his reader." If I were required to express in one word the distinguishing character of Lorenzo's amatory poems, I should say *grace:* they are full of refined sentiment, elegant simplicity, the most exquisite little touches of description, and illustrations, drawn either from external nature or from the refined mysteries of platonism: but there is a want of passion, of power, and of pathos; there is no genuine emotion; no overflow of the heart, bursting with its own intense feeling; no voice that cries aloud for our sympathy, and echoes to our inmost bosom. What true lover ever thought of apologizing for having given his time to celebrate the object of his love? "Persecuted as I have been from my youth," says Lorenzo, "some indulgence may perhaps be allowed me for having sought consolation in these pursuits."—And again, in allusion to his political situation,—"It is not to

be wondered at if I endeavoured to alleviate my anxiety by turning to more agreeable subjects of meditation; and in celebrating the charms of my mistress, sought a temporary refuge from my cares."—Thus Lorenzo tells us that it was not in obedience to the dictates of his own overflowing heart, nor yet to celebrate the charms of his mistress, and win her favor, that he wrote in her praise, but to amuse himself and distract his mind from those cares and anxieties into which he was so early plunged. It has followed as a natural consequence, that elegant as are the amatory effusions of Lorenzo, they are less celebrated, less popular, than his descriptive and moral poems. His Ambra, La Nencia, and his songs for the carnival, have all in their respective style a higher stamp of excellence and originality than his love poetry. His forte seems to have been lively description, philosophical illustration, and brilliant and sportive fancy, combined with a classic taste and polished versification. Some of those sonnets, which, though addressed to Madonna Lucretia, turn chiefly on some beautiful thought or description, are finished like gems; as that on Solitude—

Cerchi chi vuol le pompe e gli alti onori;

and that well known and charming one, "Sopra Violetti,"

Non di verdi giardin, ornati e colti, &c.

both of which have been happily translated by

Roscoe; and to these may be added the address to Cytherea—

> Lascia l' sola itua tanta diletta!
> Lascia il tuo regno delicato e bello
> Ciprigna Dea! &c.

There is another, not so well known, distinguished by its peculiar fancy and elegance—

> Spesso mi torna a mente, anzi già mai, &c.

In this he recalls to mind the time and the place, and even the vesture in which his gentle lady first appeared to him—

> Quanto vaga, gentil, leggiadra, e pia
> Non si può dir, ne imaginar assai;

and he beautifully adds,

> Quale sopra i nevosi, ed alti monti
> Apollo spande il suo bel lume adorno,
> Tal' i crin suoi sopra la bianca gonna!
> Il tempo e 'l luogo non convien ch' io conti,
> Che dov' è si bel sole è sempre giorno;
> E Paradiso, ov' è si bella Donna!

"As over the snowy summits of the high mountains Apollo sheds his golden beams, so flowed her golden tresses over her white vest.—But for the *time* and the *place*, is it necessary that I should note them? Where shines so fair a sun, can it be other than day? Where dwells so excellent a beauty, can it be other than Paradise?"

It happened in the midst of Lorenzo's visions of love and poetry, that he was called upon to give his

hand to a wife chosen by his father for political reasons. His inclinations were not consulted, as is plain from the blunt amusing manner in which he has noted it down in his memoranda. "I, Lorenzo, took to wife Donna Clarice Orsini,—or rather she was given to me, (ovvero mi fu data) on such a day." Yet a union thus inauspiciously contracted, was rendered, by the affectionate disposition of Lorenzo, and the amiable qualities of his wife, rather happy than otherwise; it is true, we have no poetical compliments addressed by Lorenzo to Donna Clarice, but there is extant a little billet written to her a few months after their marriage, from the tone of which it is fair to suppose, that Lorenzo had exchanged his poetic flame for a real attachment to an amiable woman.*

There is a very beautiful and elegant passage in the beginning of Lorenzo's commentary on his own poems, in which he enlarges on the theory of love. "The conditions (he says) which appear necessarily to belong to a true, exalted, and worthy love, are two. First,—*to love but one:* secondly,—*to love that one always.* Not many lovers have

* Lorenzo de' Medici to his wife Clarice:—

"I arrived here in safety, and am in good health; this, I believe, will please thee better than any thing else, except my return, at least so I judge from my own desire to be once more with thee. Associate as much as possible with my father and sisters. I shall make all possible speed to return to thee, for it appears a thousand years till I see thee again. Pray to God for me—if thou want any thing from this place write in time.

From Milan, 22d July, 1469. THY LORENZO."

hearts so generous as to be capable of fulfilling these two conditions; and exceedingly few women display sufficient attractions to withhold men from the violation of them; yet without these there is no true love." And afterwards, enumerating those charms of person and mind which inspire affection, he adds, "and yet these estimable qualities are not enough, unless the lover possess sensibility of heart to discern them, and elevation and generosity of soul to appreciate them."

This in the original is very elegantly expressed, and the sentiment is as true as it is exalted and graceful; but that Lorenzo was not always thus philosophically refined, that he could descend from these Platonics to be impassioned and in earnest, and that when touched to the heart, he could pour forth the language of the heart, we have a single instance, which it is impossible to allude to without feeling some emotion of curiosity, which can never now be gratified.

We find among Lorenzo's poems, written later in life than those addressed to Lucretia Donati, one entitled simply "An Elegy;" the style is different from that of his earlier poetry, and has more of the terseness and energy of Dante than the sweetness and flow of Petrarch. It begins

"Vinto dagli amorosi, empi martiri."

"Subdued by the fierce pangs of my love, a thousand times have I taken up the pen, to tell

thee, O gentle lady mine, all the sighs of my sick heart. Then fearing thy displeasure, I have, on a second thought, flung it from me. * * * Yet must I speak, for if words were wanting, my pallid cheek would betray my sufferings."

He then tells her that he does not seek her dishonor, but only her kind thoughts, and that he may find a place within her gentle heart.

> Perchè non cerco alcun tuo disonore,
> Ma sol la grazia tua, e che piaci
> Che 'l mio albergo sia dentro al tuo core!

He wishes that he might be once permitted to twine his fingers in her hair; to gaze into her eyes; —but he complains that she will not even meet his look,—that she resolutely turns her eyes another way at his approach.—"But do with me what thou wilt: while I live upon this earth, still I must love thee, since it so pleaseth Heaven—I swear it! and my hand writes it!

* * * * *

".Come then! oh come, while yet thy gracious looks may avail me, for delay is death to one who loves like me! Would I could send with this scroll all the torture of heart, the tears and sighs, the gesture and the look, that should accompany it!"

> Ma s' egli avvien, che soletti ambo insieme,
> Posso il braccio tenerti al collo avvolto,
> Vedrai come d'amore alto arde e geme,
> Vedrai cader dal mio pallido volto,
> Nel tuo candido sen lagrime tante.

(I leave these lines untranslated for the benefit of the Italian reader.) After a few more stanzas, we have this very unequivocal passage:

"O would to Heaven, lady, that marriage had made us one! ah, why didst thou not come into this world a little sooner?—or I a little later? Yet why these vain thoughts? since I am doomed to see thee the bride of another, and am myself fettered in these marriage bonds!

* * * * *

"Thou knowest, Madonna, that these sighs, these burning words, are not feigned: for even as Love dictates does my hand write.

* * * * *

"My life and death are with thee;—grant me but a few words, and I am content to live;—if not, let me die! and let my poor remains be laid in some forlorn and sequestered spot. Let none whisper the cause of my death, lest it should grieve thee! enough if some kind hand engrave upon my tomb,—'*He perished through too much love and too much cruelty.*'"

I have given literally the leading sentiments of this little poem, but have left untranslated many of the stanzas. There are one or two concetti; but as Ginguené truly observes on a different occasion, "Dans les poëtes Italiens, souvent la passion est vraie, même quand l'expression ne l'est pas."

The style is so natural, the transitions so abrupt, the expressions so energetic, and there are so few

of those descriptive ornaments which are plentifully scattered through Lorenzo's other poems, that I should pronounce it the real effusion of a heart, touched,—and deeply touched. It is to be regretted that we know nothing of the name or real character of an object who, deserving or not, could call forth such strong lines as these; and in the plenitude of his power and fame, and in the midst of his great and serious avocations, deeply, though secretly, tyrannize over the peace of Lorenzo.

He is accused,—I regret that I must allude to it,—of considerable license of manners with regard to women;—a reproach from which Roscoe has fairly vindicated him. United, at the age of twenty-one, to a woman he had never seen; residing in a dissipated capital, surrounded by temptation, and from disposition, peculiarly sensible to the influence of women, it is not matter of astonishment if Lorenzo's conjugal faith was not preserved immaculate,—if he occasionally became the thrall of beauty, and—(since he was not likely to be caught by vulgar charms,)—if he sighed, *par hazard*, for one who was not to be tempted by power or gold: such a one as his Elegy indicates. Two points are certain,—that his uniform respect and kindness to his wife Clarice, left her no reason to complain; while his discretion was such, that though historians have hazarded a general accusation against him in this one particular, there exists not in any contemporary writer one scandalous anecdote of his private life, nor the name of any woman to whom he was

attached, except that of his poetical love, Lucretia Donati.

Lorenzo de' Medici was not handsome in face, nor graceful in form; but he was captivating in his manners, and excelled in all manly exercises. The engraving prefixed to Roscoe's life of him, does not do justice to his countenance. I remember the original picture in the gallery of Florence, on which I have looked day after day for many minutes together, with an interest that can only be felt on the very spot where the memory of Lorenzo is "wherever we look, wherever we move." In spite of the stoop in the shoulders, the unbecoming dress, and the harsh features, I was struck by the grand simplicity of the head, and the mingled expression of acuteness, benevolence, and earnest thought in the countenance; the imagination filled with the splendid character of the man, might possibly have perceived more than the eye,—but such was my impression.

Lorenzo died in his forty-fourth year, in 1492. He is not interred in that celebrated chapel of his family, rich with the sublimest productions of Michael Angelo's chisel: he lies at the opposite side of the church, in a magnificent sarcophagus of bronze, which contains also the ashes of his murdered brother, Giuliano.—Among the recollections, sweet and bitter, which I brought from Florence, is the remembrance of a day when retiring from the glare of an Italian noontide, I stood in the church of San Lorenzo, sketching the tomb of Lo-

renzo and Giuliano de' Medici. The spot whence I viewed it was so obscure, that I could scarce see the lines traced by my pencil; but immediately behind the sarcophagus, there flowed from above a stream of strong light, relieving with added effect the dark outline of the sculptured ornaments. Through the grating which formed the background, I could see the figures of shaven monks and stoled priests gliding to and fro, like apparitions; and while I thought more,—O much more,—of the still and cold repose which wrapped the dead, than of their high deeds and far-spread fame, the plaintive music of a distant choir, chanting the *Via crucis*, floated through the pillared aisles, receding or approaching as the signers changed their station; swelling, sinking, and at length dying away on the ear.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FAIR GERALDINE.

In the reign of the second Grande Duke of Tuscany, of Lorenzo's family, (Cosmo I.) Florence, it is said, beheld a novel and extraordinary spectacle; a young traveller, from a court and a country which the Italians of that day seemed to regard

much as we now do the Esquimaux,* combining the learning of the scholar and the amiable bearing of the courtier, with all the rash bravery of youthful romance, astonished the inhabitants of that queenly city, first, by rivalling her polished nobles in the splendor of his state, and gallantry of his manners, and next, by boldly proclaiming that his "lady love" was superior to all that Italy could vaunt of beauty, that she was "oltre le belle, bella," fair beyond the fairest,—and maintaining his boast in a solemn tourney held in her honor, to the overthrow of all his opponents.

This was our English Surrey; one of the earliest and most elegant of our amatory poets, and the lover of the Fair Geraldine.

It must be admitted that the fame of the Earl of Surrey does not rest merely on title, and that if the fair Geraldine had never existed, he would still have lived in history as an accomplished scholar, soldier, courtier, and been lamented as the noble victim of a suspicious tyrant. But if some fair object of romantic gallantry had not given the impulse to his genius, and excited him to try his powers in a style of which no models yet existed in his native language,†—it may be doubted whether his name would have descended to us with all those poetical and chivalrous associations

* "Those bears of English—those barbarous islanders," are common phrases in the Italian writers of that age.

† Surrey introduced the sonnet, and the use of blank verse into our literature. It is a curious fact, that the earliest blank verse extant was written by Saint Francis.

which give a charm and an interest to his memory far beyond that of a mere historical character. As for the fair-haired, blue-eyed Geraldine, the mistress of his fancy and affections, and the subject of his verse, her identity long lay *entombed*, as it were, in a poetical name; but Surrey had loved her, had maintained her beauty at the point of his lance—had made her "famous by his pen, and glorious by his sword." This was more than enough to excite the interest and the enquiries of posterity, and lo! antiquaries and commentators fell to work, archives were searched, genealogies were traced, and at length the substance of this beautiful poetical shadow was detected: she was proved to have been the Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, afterwards the wife of a certain Earl of Lincoln, of whom little is known—but that he married the woman Surrey had loved.

Surrey has ingeniously contrived to compress, within the compass of a sonnet, some of the most interesting particulars of the personal and family history of his mistress. The Fitzgeralds derive their origin from the Geraldi of Tuscany,—hence

> From Tuscan came my ladye's worthy race,
> Fair Florence was sometime their ancient seat.

She was born and nurtured in Ireland—

> Fostered she was with milk of Irish breast.

Her father was the Earl of Kildare, her mother allied to the blood royal.

Her sire an Earl, her dame of Prince's blood.

She was brought up (through motives of compassion, after the misfortunes of her family) at Hunsdon, with the Princesses Mary and Elizabeth, where Surrey, who frequently visited them in company with the young Duke of Richmond,* first beheld her.

Hunsdon did first present her to mine eyes.

She was then extremely young, not above fourteen or fifteen, as it appears from comparative dates; and Surrey says very clearly,

She wanted years to understand
The grief that he did feel.

But even then her budding charms made him confess, as he beautifully expresses it—

How soon a look can print a thought
That never may remove!

It was during the festivals held at Hampton Court, whither she accompanied the Princesses, that her conquest was completed; and Surrey being afterwards confined at Windsor,† was deprived of her society.

Bright is her hue, and Geraldine she hight;
Hampton me taught to wish her first for mine,
Windsor, alas! doth chase me from her sight.

* Natural brother of the princesses; he was the son of Henry VIII. by Lady Talbot.

† He was imprisoned for eating meat in Lent.

Hampton Court was the scene of their frequent interviews. Surrey mentions a certain recessed or bow window, in which, retired apart from the gay throng around them, they held "converse sweet." Here she gave him, as it seems, some encouragement; too proud of such a distinguished suitor to let him escape. He in the same moment confesses himself a very slave, and betrays an indignant consciousness of the arts by which she keeps him entangled in her chain.

In silence tho' I keep to such secrets myself,
Yet do I see how she sometimes doth yield a look by stealth;
As tho' it seemed, I wis,—"I will not lose thee so!"
When in her heart so sweet a thought did never truly grow.

He accuses her expressly of a love of general admiration, and of giving her countenance and favor to unworthy rivals. In "The Warning to a Lover how he is abused by his Love," he thus addressed himself as the deceived lover:—

Where thou hast loved so long, with heart and all thy power,
I see thee fed with feigned words, &c.
I see her pleasant cheer in chiefest of thy suit:
When thou art gone, I see him come who gathers up the fruit;
And eke in thy respect, I see the base degree
Of him to whom she gives the heart, that promised was to thee!*

* Lady Frances Vere.

The fair Geraldine must have been a practised coquette to have sat for a picture so finished and so strongly marked: yet before we blame her for this disdainful trifling, it should be remembered that Lord Surrey, at the time he was wooing her with "musicke vows," was either married or contracted to another,*—a circumstance quite in keeping with the fashionable system of Platonic gallantry introduced from Italy—

O Plato! Plato! you have been the cause, &c.

I forbear to continue the apostrophe.

According to the old tradition, repeated by all Surrey's biographers, he visited on his travels the famous necromancer Cornelius Agrippa, who in a magic mirror revealed to him the fair figure of his Geraldine, lying dishevelled on a couch, and, by the light of a taper, reading one of his tenderest sonnets.

Fair all the pageant, but how passing fair
The slender form that lay on couch of Ind!
O'er her white bosom strayed her hazel hair,
Pale her dear cheek, as if for love she pined.
All in her night-robe loose, she lay reclined,
And pensive read from tablet eburnine,
Some strain that seemed her inmost soul to find;—
That favored strain was Surrey's raptured line,
That fair and lovely form, the Lady Geraldine!†

* Surrey's Works: Nott's Edit. 4to.
† Lay of the Last Minstrel

This beautiful incident is too celebrated, too touching, not to be one of the articles of our poetical faith. It was believed by Surrey's contemporaries, and in the age immediately following was gravely related by a grave historian. It shows at least the celebrity which his poetry, unequalled at that time, had given to his love, and the object of it. In fact when divested of the antique spelling, which, at the first glance, revolts by the impression it gives of difficulty and obscurity, some of the lyrics of Surrey have not since been surpassed either in elegance of sentiment, or flowing grace of expression :—for example—

A Praise of his Love, wherein he reproveth them that compare their Ladies with his.

Give place ye lovers here before,
That spent your bostes and braggs in vain,
My ladye's beauty passeth more
The best of yours, I dare well sayne,
Then doth the sun the candle light,
Or brightest day the darkest night.

And thereto hath a truth as just,
As had Penelope the fair:
For what she sayeth you may trust,
As it by writing sealed were;
And virtues hath she many moe,
Than I with pen have skill to show.

The following sonnet is rather a specimen of versification than of sentiment: the subject is borrowed from Petrarch.

A COMPLAINT BY NIGHT, OF A LOVER NOT BELOVED.

Alas! so all things now do hold their peace,
Heaven and earth disturbed in no thing;
The beasts, the air, the birds their song do cease,
And the night's car the stars about doth bring:
Calm is the sea, the waves work less and less:
So am not I, whom love, alas! doth wring
Bringing before my face the great increase
Of my desires, whereas I weep and sing,
In joy and woe, as in a doubtful case.
For my sweet thoughts, some time do pleasure bring;
But by and bye, the cause of my disease,
Gives me a pang that inwardly doth sting,
When that I think, what grief it is again
To live, and lack the thing should rid my pain.

Geraldine was so beautiful as to authorize the raptures of her poetical lover. Even in her later years, when, as Countess of Lincoln, she attended on Queen Elizabeth, she retained so much of her excelling loveliness, that the adoration paid to her in youth, was not wondered at; and her celebrity as Surrey's early love, is alluded to by contemporary writers.* There can be no doubt that she was an accomplished woman: the learned education the Princesses received at Hunsdon, (in the advantages of which she participated,) is well known Her father, Lord Kildare, was a man of vigorous intellect and uncommon attainments for the age in which he lived. He was the eighth Earl of his noble family, and being engaged in the disturbances of Ireland, then a scene of eternal dissension and

* Queen Elizabeth's Progresses, vol. i.

bloodshed between the native princes and the lords of the English pale, he fell under the displeasure of Henry the Eighth: his eldest son, and his five brothers, who had been seized as hostages, were executed on the same day at Tyburn, and the "stout old Earl," as he is called in history, died broken-hearted in the Tower. The mother of Geraldine is rendered interesting to us by a little family trait, related by one of our old Chroniclers.* Lord Kildare, he tells us, "was so well affected to his wife, as he would not at anie time buy a suite of apparel for himself, but he would suite her with the same stuffe; the which gentlenesse she recompensed with equal kindnesse; for after that he, the said Earle, deceased in the Tower, she did not onley live a chaste and honorable widow, but also nightly, before she went to bed, she would resort to his picture, and there, with a solemn *congé*, she would bid her Lorde good nighte."

This Countess of Kildare was Lady Elizabeth Grey, grand-daughter of that famous Lady Elizabeth Grey, whose virtue made her the queen of Edward the Fourth. Thus the fair Geraldine was cousin to the young princes who were smothered in the Tower, and may truly be said to have been of "Prince's blood."

It must be admitted that the general tone of Surrey's poems does not give us a favorable idea of the fair Geraldine's manners and character. She was variable, coquettish, and fond of admira-

* Hollinshed.

tion;—on this point I have offered some apology for her. She is accused also of marrying twice, from *mercenary* motives, and thus forfeiting the attachment of her noble and poetical lover.* This is unfair, I think; there is no *proof* that Geraldine married solely from *mercenary* motives. Surrey was himself married, and both the men to whom she was successively united,† were eminent in their day for high personal qualities, though in comparison with Surrey, they have been reduced to hide their diminished heads in peerages and genealogies.

The Earl of Surrey was beheaded in 1547. The fair Geraldine was living forty years afterwards: she survived for a short time her second husband, Lord Lincoln; and with him lies buried under a sumptuous tomb at Windsor: she left no descendants. Her youngest brother, Edward Fitzgerald, was the lineal ancestor of the present Duke of Leinster.

The only original portrait of the fair Geraldine, now extant, is in the gallery of the Duke of Bedford, at Woburn; and I am told that it is sufficiently beautiful to justify Surrey's admiration.‡

* See Nott's edition of Surrey's Works.

† She was the second wife of Sir Anthony Browne, and the third wife of the Earl of Lincoln, ancestor to the Duke of Newcastle.

‡ Those who are curious about historic proofs, may consult Anecdotes of the family of Howard, Memoirs and Works of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, edited by Dr. Nott, Park's Royal and Noble Authors, and Collins's Peerage, by Brydges.

CHAPTER XIII.

GINEVRA, AND ALESSANDRA STROZZI.

While the sagacity of Horace Walpole was tracking the identity of the fair Geraldine through the mazes of poetry and probability,—through parchments, through peerages, through papers, and through patents, he must now and then have been annoyed by the provoking discretion of her chivalrous adorer, which had led him such a chase. But of all the discreet lovers that ever baffled commentators or biographers, commend me to Ariosto! though one of the last from whom discretion might have been expected on such a subject. He is known to have been particularly susceptible to the power of beauty; passionate in his attachments; and though pensive and abstracted in his general habits, almost irresistibly captivating in his intercourse with women. Yet such was his fine chivalrous feeling for the honor of those who, won by his rare qualities, yielded it to his keeping—"such his marvellous secrecy and modesty," say his Italian biographers, that although the public gaze was fixed upon him in his lifetime, and although, since his death, the minutest circumstances relative to him have been subjects of as much curiosity and research in Italy, as Shakspeare among us; yet a few scattered notices are all that can be brought together to illustrate his charming lyrics.

This mystery was not in Ariosto the effect of chance or affectation; it arose from a principle of conduct faithfully adhered to from youth to age; in behalf of which, and the many beautiful passages expressive of devotion and reverential tenderness towards our sex, scattered through his great poem, we will endeavour, (though at some little sacrifice of the pride and delicacy of women,) to pardon him, for having treated us most wickedly, on sundry other occasions. As an emblem of the reserve he had imposed on himself, a little bronze Cupid, with his finger on his lip, in token of silence, ornamented his inkstand, which is still preserved at Ferrara.

Of Ariosto's amatory poems, so full of spirit, grace, and a sort of earnest triumphant tenderness, it is impossible to doubt that the objects were real. The earliest of his serious attachments, was to a young girl of the Florentine family of the Lapi, but residing at Mantua, or in its vicinity. Her name was Ginevra,—a name he has tenderly commemorated in the Orlando Furioso, by giving it to one of his most charming and interesting heroines, —Ginevra di Scozia. He has also, after Petrarch's fashion, *played* upon this name in one or two of his sonnets; *Ginevra* signifying a juniper-tree:

> Non voglio (e Febo e Bacco mi perdoni)
> Che lor frondi mi mostrino poeta,
> Ma che un *Ginevro* sia che mi coroni!

"I wish not, (may Bacchus and Phœbus pardon me!)

either the laurel or the ivy to crown my brows; let my wreath be rather of the thorny juniper!"

His love for Ginevra, (which was fondly returned,) began in very early youth; their first interview occurred at a *Festa di Ballo*,—a fête-champêtre, where Ginevra excelled all her young companions in the dance, as much as she surpassed them in her blooming beauty. He alludes to stolen interviews, in a grove of laurels, and on the banks of the Mincio: and on the whole, confesses that he had no reason to complain of cruelty from the fair Ginevra.* This attachment lasted long; for, four years after their first meeting, Ariosto addresses her in a most impassioned strain, and vows that she was then "dearer to him than his own soul, and fairer than ever in his eyes." She seems to have left that permanent impression on his memory and fancy, that shade of tender regret with which a man of strong sensibility and ardent imagination always recurs to the first love of his youth, even when the passion itself is past. He says himself, when revisiting Mantua many years afterwards, that the scene revived all his former tenderness—

> Quel foco ch' io pensai che fosse estinto,
> Dal tempo, dagli affanni, ed il star lunge
> Signor pur arde. ———

I cannot discover what became of Ginevra ulti-

* ——— Non ebbe unqua pastore
Di me più lieto, o più felice amore!
See the canzone to Ginevra, quoted by Baruffaldi. Vita, p. 148

mately: her fate was a common one: she was loved by a celebrated man, was forsaken, and in exchange for happiness and for love, she has enjoyed for some time a shadowy renown. Her name was usually connected with that of Ariosto, till the researches of late biographers discovered the object of that more celebrated, more serious, and more lasting passion which inspired Ariosto's finest lyrics, which was subsequently sealed by a private marriage, and ended only with the poet's life. In this instance, the modesty of the lady and the discretion of Ariosto have proved in vain, for the name of *Alessandra Strozzi* is now so inseparably linked with that of her poet, that Beatrice is not more identified with Dante, nor Laura with Petrarch; though their name be more popular, and their fame more widely spread.

> Minor di grido, ma del vanto altera,
> (E ciò le basta) che suo saggio amante
> Fu 'l grande che cantò l'armi e gli amori—
> Vedi Alessandra! *

Alessandra Strozzi was the daughter of Filippo Benucci, and the widow of Tito Strozzi, a noble Florentine and famous Latin poet. At the period of her first acquaintance with Ariosto, she must have been about six-and-twenty, and a beautiful woman, on a very magnificent scale. Though I cannot find that she was distinguished for talents, or any particular taste for literature, she seems to

* Monti. Poesie varie, p. 88.

have possessed higher and more lovable qualities, which won Ariosto's admiration and secured his respect to the last.

It was on his return from Rome in 1515, that Ariosto visited Florence, intending merely to witness the grand festival which was then celebrated in honor of St. John the Baptist, and lasted several days. With what animation, what graphic power, he has described in one of his canzoni, the scene and occasion in which he first beheld his mistress! The magnificence of Florence left, he says, few traces on his memory: he could only recollect that in all that fair city, he saw nothing so fair as herself.

> Sol mi resta immortale
> Memoria, ch' io non vidi in tutta quella
> Bella città di voi, cosa più bella.

He had arrived just in time to be present at a fête, to which both were invited, and which Alessandra, notwithstanding her recent widowhood, condescended to adorn with her presence, "da preghi vinta"—conquered by the entreaties of her friends. The whole scene is set forth like some of the living and moving pictures which glow before us in the Orlando.

> Porte, finestra, vie, templi, teatri,
> Vidi pieni di Donne,
> A giochi, a pompe, sacrifici intenti.

The portrait of Alessandra in her festal attire,

and all her matronly loveliness, looks forth, as it were, from this gorgeous frame, like one of Titian's breathing, full-blown beauties. Her dress is minutely described: it was black, embroidered over with wreaths of vine-leaves and bunches of grapes, in purple and gold; her fair luxuriant hair, gathered in a net behind and parted in front, fell down on either side of her face, in long curls which touched her shoulders.

In aurei nodi, il biondo e spesso crine
In rara e sottil rete, avea raccolto;
  Soave ombra di drieto
Rendea al collo, e dinanzi alle confine
  Delle guance divine;
E discendea fin a l' avorio bianco
  Del destro omero, e manco;
Con queste reti, insidiosi amori
  Preser quel giorno, più de mille cori!

"In golden braids, her fair
And richly flowing hair
Was gather'd in a subtle net behind,—
(A subtle net and rare!)
And cast sweet shadows there
Over her neck, whilst parted ringlets, twined
In beauty, from her forehead fell away,
And hung adown her cheek where roses lay,
Touching the ivory pale, (how pale and white!)
Of both her rounded shoulders, left and right.
O crafty Loves! no more ye need your darts;
For well ye know, how many thousand hearts
(Willing captives on that day,)
In those golden meshes lay!"*

* Translated by a friend.

On her brow, just where her hair is parted, she wears a sprig of laurel, wondrously wrought in gems of gold ;

> Quel gemmato
> Allo, tra la serena fronte e l' calle assunto.

After a rapturous, but general description of the lady's surpassing beauty, this animated and admirable canzone concludes with the fine comparison of himself to the wild falcon, tamed at length to a master's hand and voice :—

> La libertade apprezza,
> Fin che perduta ancor non l' ha il falcone;
> Preso che sia, depone
> Del gire errando sì l' antica voglia,
> Che sempre che si scioglia,
> Al suo Signor a render con veloci
> Ali s' andrà, dove udirà le voci!

Ariosto, thus enamored, forgot the flight of time; instead of remaining at Florence a few days, his stay was prolonged to six months ; and as he resided in the house of his friend Vespucci, who was the brother-in-law of Alessandra, he had daily opportunities of seeing her, without in any way compromising her matronly dignity. On a certain occasion he finds her employed at her embroidery. She is working a robe, with wreaths of lilies and amaranths : these emblems of purity and love suggest, of course, the obvious compliments, but in a spirit that places the whole scene before us: Alessandra, gracefully bending at her embroidery frame, and

listening, with veiled lids, and suspended needle, to the tender homage of Ariosto, who repeats, as he hangs over her,—

> Non senza causa il giglio e l' amaranto,
> L' uno di fede, e l' altro fior d' amore, &c.

Even the pattern from which she is working, the silk, the gold, the lawn, made happy by her touch, are sanctified, are envied,—

> Avventuroso man! beato ingegno!
> Beata seta! beatissimo oro!
> Ben nato lino! inclito bel lavoro,
> Da chi vuol la mia dea prender disegno,
> Per far a vostro esempio un vestir degno,
> Che copra avorio, e perle ed un teroso!*

And he adds, " Ah, that she would rather take pattern after me, and imitate the constant love I bear her ! "

Alessandra must have excelled in needle-work, for we find frequent mention of her favorite occupation ; and it is even alluded to in the Orlando, where, describing the wound of Zerbino, Ariosto uses a comparison rather too fanciful for the occasion.

> Così talora un bel purpureo nastro
> Ho veduto patir tela d' argento,
> Da quel bianca man più ch' alabastro
> Da cui partire il cor spesso mi sento.
>
> And so, I sometimes have been wont to view
> A hand more white than alabaster, part

* Sonnet 27

The silver cloth, with ribbons red of hue,
A hand I often feel divide my heart.*

Among the personal charms of Alessandra, the most striking was the beauty and luxuriance of her hair. In the days of Ariosto, fair hair, with a golden tinge, was so much admired that it became a fashion; we are even informed that the Venetian women had invented a dye, or extract, by which they discharged the natural color of their tresses and gave them this admired hue. Almost all Titian's and Giorgione's beauties have fair hair; the "richissima capellatura bionda" of Alessandra, was a principal charm in the eyes of her lover, but it was one she was destined to lose prematurely; during a dangerous illness, some rash and luckless physician ordered all her beautiful tresses to be cut off. The remedy, it seems, was equally unnecessary and unfortunate; but here was a fine theme for an indignant lover! and Ariosto has, accordingly, lavished on it some of his most graceful and poetical ideas. Of the three elegant sonnets† in which he has commemorated the incident, it is difficult to decide which is the finest—the last, perhaps, is the most spirited: the poet bursts at once into his subject, as in a transport of grief and rage.

"When I think, as I do, a thousand, thousand times a-day, upon those golden tresses, which neither wisdom nor necessity, but hasty folly, tore,

* Stewart Rose's translation. † The 26th, 27th, and 28th.

alas! from that fair head, I am enraged,—my cheek burns with anger,—even tears gush forth, bathing my face and bosom;—I could die to be revenged on the impious stupidity of that rash hand! O Love, if such wrong goes unpunished, thine be the reproach! Remember how Bacchus avenged on the Thracian King,* his clusters torn from his sacred vines: wilt thou, who art greater far than he, do less? Wilt thou suffer the loveliest and dearest of thy possessions to be audaciously ravished, and yet bear it in silence?"†

This is powerful enough to be in downright earnest: and unsoftened by the flowing harmony of the verse and rhyme, appears even harsh, both in sentiment and expression: but the poetry and spirit being inherent, have not, I trust, quite escaped in the *transfusion*. When Ariosto, after a long absence, revisits the scene in which he first beheld the lady of his thoughts, he addresses those "marble halls, and lofty and stately roofs,

"Marmoree logge, alti e superbi tetti,"

in a strain which leaves the issue of his suit something less than doubtful:—

"Well do ye remember ye scenes, when I left ye a captive sick at heart, and pierced with Love's sweet pain: but ye know not perhaps how sweetly I died, and was restored again to life: how my gentlest Lady, seeing that my soul had forsaken

* Lycurgus, King of Thrace. † Ariosto, Rime.

me, sent me hers in return to dwell with me forever!"

"Ben vi sovvien, che di qui andai captivo,
Trafitto il cor! ma non sapete forse
Com' io morissi, e poi tornassi in vita.

E che madonna, tosto che s' accorse
Esser l' anima in lei da me fuggita,
La sua mi diede, e ch' or con questa vivo!"

The exact date of Ariosto's marriage cannot be ascertained, but the marriage itself is proved beyond a doubt:* it must have taken place about 1522. The reasons which induced Ariosto to involve in doubt and mystery his union with this admirable woman, can only be conjectured,† their intercourse was so carefully concealed, and the discretion and modesty of Alessandra so remarkable, that no suspicion of the ties which bound them to each other, existed during the life of the poet; nor did the slightest imputation ever sully the fair fame of her he loved.

It were endless to point out the various beauties of Ariosto's lyrics,—beauties, which as they spring from feeling are *felt*. We have few sonnets in a dolorous strain, few complaints of cruelty; and even these seem inspired, not by the habitual cold-

* The proofs may be consulted in Baruffaldi, "Vita di M. Ludovico Ariosto," published in 1807; and also in Frizzi, "Memorie della Famiglia Ariosto."

† Baruffaldi gives some family reasons, but they are far from being satisfactory.—VITA, in p. 159.

ness of Alessandra, but by some occasional repulses which he confesses to have deserved.

Per poco consiglio, e troppo ardire.

But we have in their place, all the glow of sensibility, the sparkling of hope, the grateful rapture of returned affection, and that power of imagery, by which, with one vivid stroke, he turns his emotions into pictures: these predominate throughout. As an instance of the latter, there is the apostrophe to Hope, "now bounding and leaping along, now creeping with coward steps and slow:"

O speranza! che ancor dietro si mena
Quando a gran salti, e quando a passi lenti!

In one of his madrigals, he says, with an elegance which is perhaps a little quaint, "my wishes soar so high, that my hopes shrink back, and dare not follow them." In the same spirit, when he is blest with the presence of his love, grief is not only banished, but, "flies with the rapidity of a falcon before the wind,"

Vola, com' un falcone che ha seco il vento!

Merely to compare his mistress to a rose, would have been commonplace. She is a rose "unfolding her *paradise* of leaves,"—a charming expression, which has been adopted, I think, by one of our living poets. Mingled with the most rapturous praise of Alessandra's triumphant beauty, we have constantly the most delightful impression of her

tenderness, her frank and courteous bearing, and the gladness which her presence diffuses through his heart, which, after the sentimental lamentations of former poets, are really a relief.

I can understand the self-congratulation, the secret enjoyment with which Ariosto dwelt on the praises of Alessandra, celebrated her charms, and exulted in her love, while her name remained an impenetrable secret,

> Nor pass'd his lips in holy silence seal'd!

But when once he had introduced her into the Orlando, he must have had a very modest idea of his own future renown, not to have anticipated the consequences. A famous passage in the 42d canto, is now universally admitted to be a description of Alessandra.* She is very strikingly introduced, and yet with the usual characteristic mystery; so that while nothing is omitted that can excite interest and curiosity, every means are taken to baffle and disappoint both. Rinaldo, while travelling in Italy, arrives at a splendid palace on the banks of the Po. It is minutely described, with all the prodigal magnificence of the Arabian Nights, and all the taste of an architect; and among other riches, is adorned with the statues of the most celebrated women of that age, all of whom are named at length; but among them stands the effigy of one so preëminent in majesty, and beauty, and intellect,

* Ruscelli Fabroni, Baruffaldi, and the late poet Monti, are all agreed on this subject.

that though she is partly veiled, and habited in modest black, (alluding to her recent widowhood,) though she wears neither jewels nor chains of gold, she eclipses all the beauties around her, as the evening star outshines all others.

> Che sotto puro velo, in nera gonna
> Senza oro e gemme, in un vestire schietto,
> Fra le più adorne non parea men bella
> Che sia tra l'altre la ciprigna stella! *

At her side stands the image of one, who in humble strains had dared to celebrate her virtues and her beauty, (meaning himself.) "But," adds the poet modestly, "I know not why he alone should be placed there, nor what he had done to be so honored; of all the rest, the names were sculptured beneath; but of these two, the names remained unknown."—No, not so! for those whom Love and Fame have joined together, who shall henceforth sunder?

The Orlando Furioso was completed and published shortly after Ariosto's visit to Florence; and this passage must have been written apparently not only before his marriage with Alessandra, but before he was even secure of her affection; perhaps he read it aloud to her, and while his stolen looks and faltering voice betrayed the true object of this most beautiful and refined homage, she must have felt the delicacy which had suppressed her name. In such a moment, how little could she

* Orlando Furioso, c. 42, st. 93.

have heeded or thought of the voice of future fame, while the accents of her lover thrilled through her heart!

Alessandra removed from Florence to Ferrara, about 1519, and inhabited the Casa Strozzi, in the street of Santa Maria in Vado. The residence of Ariosto was in the Via Mirasole, at some distance. Both houses are still standing. She died in 1552, having survived the poet about nineteen years; and she was buried in the church of San Rocco at Ferrara.

She bore no children to Ariosto; and her son, by her first marriage, (Count Guido Strozzi,) died before her.

* * * * *

Ariosto left two sons, whom he tenderly loved and had educated with extreme care. The eldest, Virginio, was the son of a beautiful Contadinella, whose name was Orsolina; the mother of the youngest, Giovanbattista, was also a girl of inferior rank; her name was Maria. Neither are once mentioned or alluded to by Ariosto; but the mischievous industry of the poet's commentators has immortalized their names and their frailty.

CHAPTER XIV.

SPENSER'S ROSALIND AND SPENSER'S ELIZABETH.

PASS we from the Ariosto of Italy, to Spenser, our English Ariosto; the translation is natural:—they resemble each other certainly, but with a difference, and this difference reigns especially in their minor poems.

The tender heart and luxuriant fancy of Spenser have thrown round his attachments all the strong interest of reality, and all the charm of romance and poetry; and since we know that the first development of his genius was owing to female influence, his Rosalind ought to have been deified for what her beauty achieved, had she possessed sufficient soul to appreciate the lustre of her conquest.

Immediately on leaving college, Spenser retired to the north of England, where he first became enamored of the fair being to whom, according to the fashion of the day, he gave the fanciful appellation of Rosalind. We are told that the letters which form this word being "well ordered," (that is, *transposed*,) comprehend her real name; but it has hitherto escaped the penetration of his biographers. Two of his friends were entrusted with the secret, and they, with a discretion more to be

regretted than blamed, have kept it. One of these, who speaks from personal knowledge, tells us, in a note on the Eclogues, that she was the daughter of a widow; that she was a gentlewoman, and one "that for her rare and singular gifts of person and mind, Spenser need not have been ashamed to love." We can believe this of a poet, whose delicate perception of female worth breathes in almost every page of his works; but after having, as he hoped, made some progress in her heart, a rival stept in, whom Spenser accuses expressly of having supplanted him by treacherous arts; and on this obscure and nameless wight, Rosalind bestowed the hand which had been coveted,—the charms which had been sung by Spenser! He suffered long and deeply, wounded both in his pride and in his love: but her beauty and virtue had made a stronger impression than her cruelty; and her lover, with a generous tenderness, not only pardoned, but found excuses for her disdain.

"I have often heard
Fair Rosalind of divers foully blam'd,
For being to that swain too cruel hard;
But who can tell what cause had that fair maid
To use him so, that loved her so well?
Or who with blame can justly her upbraid,
For loving not; for who can love compel?
And (sooth to say) it is full handy thing
Rashly to censure creatures so divine;
For demi-gods they be; and first did spring
From heaven, though graft in frailness feminine."*

* Colin Clout

The exquisite sentiment of these lines is worthy of him who sung of "Heavenly Una and her milk-white lamb."

To the memory of Rosalind,—to the long-felt influence of this first passion, and to the melancholy shade which his early disappointment cast over a mind naturally cheerful, we owe some of the most tender and beautiful passages scattered through his later poems:—for instance—the bitter sense of recollected suffering, seems to have suggested that fine description of a lover's life, which may almost rank as a *pendant* to the miseries of the courtier, so well known and often quoted.

Full little know'st thou that hast not tried, &c.

It occurs in the "Hymn to Love."

The gnawing envy, the heart-fretting fear,
The vain surmises, the distrustful shows,
The false reports that flying tales do bear,
The doubts, the dangers, the delays, the woes,
The feigned friends, the unassured foes,
With thousands more than any tongue can tell—
Do make a lover's life, a wretch's hell!

And again in the Fairy Queen:—

What equal torment to the grief of mind,
And pining anguish hid in gentle heart,
That inly feeds itself with thoughts unkind,
And nourisheth its own consuming smart;
And will to none its malady impart!

The effects produced in a noble and gentle spirit, by virtuous love for an exalted object, are not less elegantly described in another stanza, of the Hymn to Love; and must have been read with rapture in that chivalrous age. The last line is particularly beautiful.

Then forth he casts in his unquiet thought,
What he may do her favour to obtain;
What brave exploit, what peril hardly wrought,
What puissant conquest, what adventurous pain,
May please her best, and grace unto him gain;
He dreads no danger, nor misfortune fears,—
His faith, his fortune, in his breast he bears!

And in what a fine spirit of poetry, as well as feeling, is that description of the power of true beauty, which forms part of his second Hymn! It is indeed imitated from the refined Platonics of the Italian school, which then prevailed in the court, the camp, the grove, and is a little diffuse in style, a little redundant; but how rich in poetry and in the most luxuriant and graceful imagery!

How vainly then do idle wits invent,
That beauty is nought else but mixture made
Of colours fair, and goodly temperament
Of pure complexions, that shall quickly fade
And pass away like to a summer's shade;
Or that it is but comely composition
Of parts well measured, with meet disposition!

Hath white and red in it such wondrous power,
That it can pierce through th' eyes into the heart,

And therein stir such rage and restless stowre,
As nought but death can stint his dolor's smart?
Or can proportion of the outward part
Move such affection in the inward mind,
That it can rob both sense, and reason blind?

Why do not then the blossoms of the field,
Which are array'd with much more orient hue,
And to the sense most dainty odors yield,
Work like impressions in the looker's view?
Or why do not fair pictures like power show,
In which oft-times we Nature see of Art
Excell'd, in perfect limning every part?

But ah! believe me, there is more than so,
That works such wonders in the minds of men,
I, that have often prov'd, too well it know.
And who so list the like essaies to ken,
Shall find by trial, and confess it then,
That beauty is not, as fond men misdeem,
An outward show of things that only seem.

For that some goodly hue of white and red,
With which the cheeks are sprinkled, shall decay
And those sweet rosy leaves, so fairly spread
Upon the lips, shall fade and fall away,
To that they were, even to corrupted clay:—
That golden wire, those sparkling stars so bright
Shall turn to dust, and lose their goodly light.

But that fair lamp, from whose celestial ray
That light proceeds, which kindleth lover's fire,
Shall never be extinguished nor decay;
But, when the vital spirits do expire,
Unto her native planet shall retire;
For it is heavenly born and cannot die,
Being a parcel of the purest sky!

At a late period of Spenser's life, the remembrance of this cruel piece of excellence,—his Rosalind, was effaced by a second and happier love. His sonnets are addressed to a beautiful Irish girl, the daughter of a rich merchant of Cork. She it was who healed the wound inflicted by disdain and levity, and taught him the truth he has expressed in one charming line—

Sweet is that love alone, that comes with willingness!

Her name was Elizabeth, and her family (as Spenser tells us himself) obscure; but, in spite of her plebeian origin, the lady seems to have been a very peremptory and Juno-like beauty. Spenser continually dwells upon her pride of sex, and has placed it before us in many charming turns of thought, now deprecating it as a fault, but oftener celebrating it as a virtue. For instance—

Rudely thou wrongest my dear heart's desire,
In finding fault with her too portly pride:
The thing which I do most in her admire,
Is of the world unworthy most envied;
For in those lofty looks is close implied,
Scorn of base things, disdain of foul dishonor;
Threatening rash eyes which gaze on her so wide,
That loosely they ne dare to look upon her.
Such pride is praise; such portliness is honour.*

And again, in the thirteenth sonnet,—

* Sonnet 5.

In that proud port, which her so goodly graceth,
Whiles her fair face she rears up to the sky,
And to the ground, her eyelids low embaseth,
Most goodly temperature ye may descry;
Mild humblesse, mixt with awful majesty!

This picture of the deportment erect with conscious dignity, and the eyelids veiled with feminine modesty, is very beautiful. We have the figure of his Elizabeth before us in all her maidenly dignity and proud humility. The next is a softened repetition of the same characteristic portrait:

Was it the work of Nature or of Art,
Which temper'd so the features of her face,
That pride and meekness, mixt by equal part,
Do both appear to adorn her beauty's grace? *

He rebukes her with a charming mixture of reproof and flattery, in the lines—

Fair Proud! now tell me, why should fair be proud? &c.

This imperious and high-souled beauty at length gives some sign of relenting; and pursuing the train of thought and feeling through the latter part of the collection, we can trace the vicissitudes of the lady's temper, and how the lover sped in his wooing. First, she grants a smile, and it is hailed with rapture—

Sweet smile! the daughter of the Queen of Love,
Expressing all thy mother's powerful art,

* Sonnet 21.

With which she wont to temper angry Jove,
When all the gods he threats with thundering dart:
Sweet is thy virtue, as thyself sweet art!
For, when on me thou shinedst late in sadness,
A melting pleasance ran through every part,
And me revived with heart-robbing gladness! *

The effect of a first relenting and affectionate smile from a being of this character, must, in truth, have been irresistible. He tells us how lovely she appeared in his eyes,—how surpassing fair :

When that the cloud of pride which oft doth dark
Her goodly light, with smiles she drives away!

He finds her one day embroidering in silk a bee and a spider,

Woven all about,
With woodbynd flowers and fragrant eglantine,

and he playfully compares himself to a spider, and her to the bee, whom, after long and weary watching, he was at length caught in his snare. This pretty incident is the subject of the 71st Sonnet. The rapture of grateful affection is more eloquent in the Sonnet beginning

Joy of my life! full oft for loving you
I bless my lot, that was so lucky placed, &c.

When he is allowed to hope, the pride which had before checked and chilled him, seems to change

* Sonnet 39.

its character. He feels all the exultation of being beloved of one, not easily gained, and "assured unto herself."

> Thrice happy she that is so well assured
> Unto herself, and settled so in heart, &c.*

After a courtship of about three years, he sues for the possession of the fair hand to which he had so long aspired; promising her (and not vainly,) all the immortality his verse could bestow,—

> Even this verse, vowed to eternity,
> Shall be of her immortal monument,
> And tell her praise to eternity!

The fair Elizabeth at length confesses herself won; but expresses some fears at the idea of relinquishing her maiden freedom. His reply is, perhaps, the most beautiful of all the Sonnets. It has all the tenderness, elegance, and fancy, which distinguish Spenser in his happiest moments of inspiration.

> The doubt which ye misdeem, fair love, is vain,
> That fondly fear to lose your liberty:
> When, losing one, two liberties ye gain,
> And make him bound that bondage erst did fly.
> Sweet be the bands, the which true love doth tye
> Without constraint, or dread of any ill:
> The gentle bird feels no captivity
> Within her cage; but sings, and feeds her fill:

* Sonnet 59.

There pride dare not approach, nor discord spill
The league 'twixt them, that loyal love hath bound:
But simple Truth, and mutual Good-will,
Seeks, with sweet peace, to salve each other's wound:
There Faith doth fearless dwell in brazen tower,
And spotless Pleasure builds her sacred bower.*

The *Amoretti*, as Spenser has fancifully entitled his Sonnets, are certainly tinctured with a good deal of the verbiage and pedantry of the times; but I think I have shown that they contain passages of earnest feeling, as well as high poetic beauty. Spenser married his Elizabeth, about the year 1593, and he has crowned his amatory effusion with a most impassioned and triumphant epithalamion on his own nuptials, which he concludes with a prophecy, that it shall stand a perpetual monument of his happiness, and thus it has been. The passage in which he describes his youthful bride, is perhaps one of the most beautiful and vivid *pictures* in the whole compass of English poetry.

Behold, while she before the altar stands,
Hearing the holy priest that to her speaks,
And blesses her with his two happy hands,
How the red roses flush up in her cheeks,
And the pure snow, with goodly vermeil stain,
Like crimson died in grain!
That even the angels, which continually
About the sacred altar do remain,
Forget their service, and about her fly,

* Sonnet 65.

Oft peeping in her face, which seems more fair,
The more they on it stare.
But her sad eyes, still fastened on the ground,
Are governed with a goodly modesty
That suffers not a look to glance away,
Which may let in a little thought unsound.
Why blush ye, love! to give to me your hand
The pledge of all our band!
Sing! ye sweet angels! Hallelujah sing!
That all the woods may answer, and their echoes ring!

And the rapturous apostrophe to the evening star is in a fine strain of poetry.

Late, though it be, at last I see it gloom,
And the bright evening star, with golden crest,
Appear out of the west!
Fair child of beauty! glorious lamp of love!
That all the host of heaven in ranks dost lead,
And guidest lovers through the night's sad dread,
How cheerfully thou lookest from above,
And seem'st to laugh atween thy twinkling light!

As Ariosto has contrived to introduce his personal feelings, and the memory of his love, into the Orlando Furioso, so Spenser has enshrined *his* in the Fairy Queen; but he has not, I think, succeeded so well in the *manner* of celebrating the woman he delighted to honor. Ariosto has the advantage over the English poet, in delicacy and propriety of feeling as well as power. Spenser's picture of the swelling eminence, the lawn, the clustering trees, the cascade—

Whose silver waves did softly tumble down,

haunted by nymphs and fairies; the bevy of beauties who dance in a circle round the lady of his love, while he himself, in his character of Colin Clout, sits aloof piping on his oaten reed, remind us of one of Claude's landscapes; and the difference between the pastoral luxuriance of this diffuse description, and the stately magnificence of Ariosto's, is very characteristic of the two poets. Were I to choose, however, I would rather have been the object of Ariosto's compliment than of Spenser's. The passage in the Fairy Queen occurs in the 10th canto of Legend of Sir Calidore; and all his commentators are agreed that the allusion is to his Elizabeth, and not to Rosalind.

Both are mentioned in "Colin Clout's come home again." Rosalind, and her disdainful rejection of the poet's love, are alluded to near the end, in some lines already quoted; but a very beautiful passage, near the commencement of the poem, clearly alludes to Elizabeth, under whose thrall he was at the time it was written.

> Ah! far be it, (quoth Colin Clout,) fro me,
> That I, of gentle maids, should ill deserve,
> For that myself I do profess to be
> Vassal to one, whom all my days I serve;
> The beam of Beauty, sparkled from above,
> The flower of virtue and pure chastitie;
> The blossom of sweet joy and perfect love;
> The pearl of peerless grace and modesty!
> To her, my thoughts I daily dedicate;
> To her, my heart I nightly martyrise;
> To her, my love I lowly do prostrate;

To her, my life, I wholly sacrifice;
My thought, my heart, my life, my love, is she! &c.

Spenser married his Elizabeth about the year 1593. He resided at this time at the Castle of Kilcolman, in the south of Ireland, a portion of the forfeited domains of the Earl of Desmond having been assigned to him: but the adherents of that unhappy chief saw in Spenser only an invader of their rights,—a stranger living on their inheritance, while they were cast out to starvation or banishment. He and his family dwelt in continual fears and disturbance from the distracted state of the country; and at length, about two years after his marriage, he was attacked in his castle by the native Irish. He and his wife escaped with difficulty, and one of their children perished in the flames. After this catastrophe they came to England, and Spenser died in 1598, about five years after his marriage with Elizabeth. The short period of their union, though disturbed by misfortunes, losses, and worldly cares, was never clouded by domestic disquiet. This haughty beauty,

Whose lofty countenance seemed to scorn
Base thing, and think how she to heaven might climb,

became the tenderest and most faithful of wives. How long she survived her husband is not known; but though scarce past the bloom of youth at the period of her loss, we have no account of her marrying again.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE LOVE OF SHAKSPEARE.

SHAKSPEARE—I approach the subject with reverence, and even with fear,—is the only poet I am acquainted with and able to appreciate, who appears to have been really heaven-inspired: the workings of his wondrous and all-embracing mind were directed by a higher influence than ever was exercised by woman, even in the plenitude of her power and her charms. Shakspeare's genius waited not on Love and Beauty, but Love and Beauty ministered to *him;* he perceived like a spirit; he was created, to create; his own individuality is lost in the splendor, the reality, and the variety of his own conceptions. When I think what those are, I feel how needless, how vain it were to swell the universal voice with one so weak as mine. Who would care for it that knows and feels Shakspeare? Who would listen to it that does not, if there be such?

It is not Shakspeare as a great power bearing a great name,—but Shakspeare in his less divine and less known character,—as a lover and a man, who finds a place here. The only writings he has left, through which we can trace any thing of his personal feelings and affections, are his Sonnets. Every one who reads them, who has tenderness or

taste, will echo Wordsworth's denunciation against the "flippant insensibility" of some of his commentators, who talked of an Act of Parliament not being strong enough to compel their perusal; and will agree in his opinion, that they are full of the most exquisite feelings, most felicitously expressed; but as to the object to whom they were addressed, a difference of opinion prevails. From a reference, however, to all that is known of Shakspeare's life and fortunes, compared with the internal presumptive evidence contained in the Sonnets, it appears that some of them are addressed to his amiable friend, Lord Southampton: and others, I think, are addressed in Southampton's name, to that beautiful Elizabeth Vernon, to whom the Earl was so long and ardently attached.* The Queen, who did not encourage matrimony among her courtiers, absolutely refused her consent to their union. She treated him as she did Raleigh in the affair of Elizabeth Throckmorton; and Southampton, after four years' impatient submission and still increasing love, as tenderly returned by his mistress, married without the Queen's knowledge, lost her favor forever, and nearly lost his head.†

* She was the grandmother of Lady Russell.

† Elizabeth Vernon was first cousin to Essex. "Was it treason?" asked Essex indignantly, in one of his eloquent letters; "Was it treason in my Lord of Southampton to marry my poor kinswoman, that neither long imprisonment, nor any punishment besides that hath been usual in such cases, can satisfy or appease?"

That Lord Southampton is the subject of the first fifty-five Sonnets is sufficiently clear; and some of these are perfectly beautiful,—as the 30th, 32d, 41st, 54th. There are others scattered through the rest of the volume, on the same subject; but there are many which admit of no such interpretation, and are without doubt inspired by the real object of a real passion, of whom nothing can be discovered, but that she was dark-eyed* and dark-haired,* that she excelled in music,† and that she was one of a class of females who do not always, in losing all right to our respect, lose also their claim to the admiration of the sex who wronged them, or the compassion of the gentler part of their own, who have rejected them. This is so clear from various passages, that unhappily there can be no doubt of it.‡ He has flung over her, designedly it should seem, a veil of immortal texture and fadeless hues, "branched and embroidered like the painted Spring," but almost impenetrable even to our imagination. There are few allusions to her personal beauty, which can in any way individualize her, but bursts of deep and passionate feeling, and eloquent reproach, and contending emotions, which show, that if she could awaken as much love and impart as much happiness as woman ever inspired or bestowed, he endured on her account all the pangs of agony, and shame, and jealousy;—that our

* Sonnets 127, 130. † Sonnet 128.

‡ See "Douce's Illustrations of Shakspeare."

Shakspeare—he, who, in the omnipotence of genius, wielded the two worlds of reality and imagination in either hand, who was in conception and in act scarce less than a GOD, was in passion and suffering not more than a MAN.

Instead of any elaborate description of her person, we have, in the only Sonnet which sets forth her charms, the rich materials for a picture, rather than the picture itself.

The forward violet thus did I chide:
Sweet thief, whence didst thou steal thy sweet that smells,
If not from my Love's breath? The purple pride
Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells,
In my Love's veins thou hast too grossly dy'd.
The lily I condemned for thy hand,
And buds of marjoram had stolen thy hair:
The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,
One blushing shame, another white despair;
A third, nor red nor white, had stolen of both,
And to his robbery had annex'd thy breath;
But for his theft, in pride of all his growth
A vengeful canker eat him up to death.
More flowers I noted, yet I none could see,
But sweet, or color, it had stolen from thee.

He intimates that he found a rival in one of his own most intimate friends, who was also a poet.* He laments her absence in this exquisite strain;—

How like a winter hath my absence been
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen,
What old December's bareness everywhere!

* Sonnets 80, 83.

* * * * *

For Summer and his pleasure wait on thee,
And thou away, the very birds are mute!

He dwells with complacency on her supposed truth and tenderness, her bounty like Juliet's, "boundless as the sea, her love as deep."

Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,
Still constant in a wondrous excellence.

Then, as if conscious upon how unstable a foundation he had built his love, he expresses his fear lest he should be betrayed, yet remain unconscious of the wrong.

For there can live no hatred in thine eye,
Therefore in that I cannot know thy change!
In many's looks, the false heart's history
Is writ in moods and frowns, and wrinkles strange.
But heaven in thy creation did decree,
That in thy face sweet love should ever dwell.

He bitterly reproaches her with her levity and falsehood, and himself that he can be thus unworthily enslaved,—

What potions have I drunk of Syren tears, &c.

Then, with lover-like inconsistency, excuses her,—

As on the finger of a throned queen
The basest jewel will be well esteemed;
So are those errors that in thee are seen
To truths translated, and for true things deem'd.

And the following are powerfully and painfully expressive :—

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame,
Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name!
Oh, in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!

O, what a mansion have those vices got,
Which for their habitation chose out thee,
Where Beauty's veil doth cover every blot,
And all things turn to fair that eyes can see!

"Who taught thee," he says in another Sonnet,

— to make me love thee more
The more I hear, and see just cause for hate?

He who wrote these and similar passages was certainly under the full and irresistible influence of female fascination. But who it was that thus ruled the universal heart and mighty spirit of our Shakspeare, we know not. She stands behind him a veiled and a nameless phantom. Neither dare we call in Fancy to penetrate that veil; for who would presume to trace even the faintest outline of such a being as Shakspeare could have loved?

* * * * *

I think it doubtful to whom were addressed those exquisite lines,

Then hate me when thou wilt, if ever, now! &c.*

but probably to this very person.

* Sonnet 172.

The Sonnets in which he alludes to his profession as an actor; where he speaks of the brand, "which vulgar scandal stamped upon his brow," and of having made himself "a motley to men's view,"* are undoubtedly addressed to Lord Southampton.

O, for my sake, do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide,
Than public means, which public manners breeds;
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdu'd
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.
Pity me then, and wish I were renew'd.

The last I shall remark, perhaps the finest of all, and breathing the very soul of profound tenderness and melancholy feeling, must, I think, have been addressed to a female.

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile earth, with vilest worms to dwell:
Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it; for I love you so,
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.
O if (I say) you look upon this verse,
When I perhaps compounded am with clay
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse:
But let your love ev'n with my life decay:
Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
And mock you with me after I am gone.

* Sonnets 110, 111.

The period assigned to the composition of these Sonnets, and the attachment which inspired them, is the time when Shakspeare was living a wild and irregular life, between the court and the theatre, after his flight from Stratford. He had previously married, at the age of seventeen, Judith Hathaway, who was eight or ten years older than himself: he returned to his native town, after having sounded all depths of life, of nature, of passion, and ended his days as the respected father of a family, in calm, unostentatious privacy.

One thing I will confess:—It is natural to feel an intense and insatiable curiosity relative to great men, a curiosity and interest for which nothing can be too minute, too personal.—And yet when I had ransacked all that had ever been written, discovered, or surmised, relative to Shakspeare's private life, for the purpose of throwing some light upon his Sonnets, I felt no gratification, no thankfulness to those whose industry had raked up the very few particulars which can be known. It is too much, and it is not enough: it disappoints us in one point of view—it is superfluous in another: what need to surround with common-place, trivial associations, registers of wills and genealogies, and I know not what,—the mighty spirit who in dying left behind him not merely a name and fame, but a perpetual being, a presence and a power, identified with our nature, diffused through all time, and ruling the heart and the fancy with an uncontrollable and universal sway!

I rejoice that the name of no one woman is popularly identified with that of Shakspeare. He belongs to us all!—the creator of Desdemona, and Juliet, and Ophelia, and Imogen, and Viola, and Constance, and Cornelia, and Rosalind, and Portia, was not the poet of one woman, but the POET OF WOMANKIND.

CHAPTER XVI.

SYDNEY'S STELLA.

AT the very name of Sir Philip Sydney,—the generous, gallant, all-accomplished Sydney,—the roused fancy wakes, as at the sound of a silver trumpet, to all the gay and splendid associations of chivalry and romance. He was in the court of Elizabeth, what Surrey had been in that of her father, Henry the Eighth; and like his prototype, Sir Calidore in the Fairy Queen,—

> Every look and word that he did say
> Was like enchantment, that through both the ears
> And both the eyes, did steal the heart away.

And as Surrey had his Fair Geraldine, Sydney had his Stella.

Simplicity was not the fashion of Elizabeth's age

in any particular; the conversation and the poetry addressed by her stately romantic courtiers to her and her maids of honor, were like the dresses they wore,—stiff with jewels and standing on end with embroidery, gorgeous of hue and fantastic in form; but with many a brilliant gem of exceeding price, scattered up and down, where one would scarce think to find them; losing something of their effect by being misplaced, but none of their inherent beauty and value. The poetry of Sir Philip Sydney was extravagantly admired in his own time, and it has since been less read than it deserves. It contains much of the pedantic quaintness, the labored ornament, the cumbrous phraseology, which was the taste, the language of the day: but he had elegance of mind and tenderness of feeling; above all, he was in earnest, and accordingly, there are beautiful and brilliant things scattered through both his poetry and prose. If his "Phœnix-Stella" be less popularly celebrated than the Fair Geraldine,—her name less intimate with our fancy,—it is not because her poet lacked skill to immortalize her in superlatives: it is the recollection of the mournful fate and darkened fame of that beautiful but ill-starred woman, contrasted with the brilliant career and spotless glory of her lover, which strikes the imagination with a painful contrast, and makes us reluctant to dwell on her memory.

The Stella of Sydney's poetry, and the Philoclea of his Arcadia, was the Lady Penelope Devereux, the elder sister of the favorite Essex. While

yet in her childhood, she was the intended bride of Sydney, and for several years they were considered as almost engaged to each other; it was natural, therefore, at this time, that he should be accustomed to regard her with tenderness and unreproved admiration, and should gratify both by making her the object of his poetical raptures. She was also less openly, but even more ardently, loved by young Charles Blount, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, who seems to have disputed with Sydney the first place in her heart.

She is described as a woman of exquisite beauty, on a grand and splendid scale; dark sparkling eyes; pale brown hair: a rich vivid complexion; a regal brow and a noble figure. Sydney tells us that she was at first "most fair, most cold;"—and the beautiful sonnet,

> With how sad steps, O moon, thou climb'st the sky! *
> How silently, and with how wan a face!

refers to his earlier feelings. He describes a tilting match, held in presence of the Queen and Court, in which he came off victor—

> Having this day my horse, my hand, my lance,
> Guided so well, that I obtained the prize, &c.†

"Stella looked on," he says, "and from her fair eyes sent forth the encouraging glance that gave him victory." These soft and brilliant eyes are

* Sonnet 31. † Sonnet 41.

often and beautifully touched upon; and it must be remarked, never without an allusion to the *modesty* of their expression.

O eyes! that do the spheres of beauty move,
Which, while they make Love conquer, conquer Love.

And on some occasion, when she turned from him bashfully, he addresses her in a most impassioned strain,—

Soul's joy! bend not those morning stars from me,
Where virtue is made strong by beauty's might,
Where love is chasteness—pain doth learn delight
And humbleness doth dwell with majesty:
Whatever may ensue, O let me be
Copartner of the riches of that sight;
Let not my eyes be hell-driven from that light,
O look! O shine! O let me die, and see! *

Another, "To Sleep," is among the most beautiful, and I believe more generally known.

Look up, fair lids! the treasure of my heart! &c.

There is also much vivacity and earnest feeling in the lines addressed to one who had lately left the presence of Stella, and of whom he inquires of her welfare. Whoever has known what it is to be separated from those beloved, to ask after them with anxious yet suppressed fondness, of some unsympathizing acquaintance, to be alternately tantalized and *desesperé*, by their vague and careless

* Sonnet 48.

replies, will understand, will feel their truth and beauty. Even the quaint, petulant commencement is true to the sentiment:

> Be your words made, good Sir, of Indian ware,
> That you allow me them at so small rate?
>
> * * * * *
> When I demand of Phœnix Stella's state,
> You say, forsooth, "You left her well of late."
> O God! think you that satisfies *my* care?
> I would know whether she do sit or walk,—
> How clothed, how waited on? sighed she, or smiled?
> Whereof—with whom—how often did she talk?
> With what pastime time's journey she beguiled?
> If her lips deign'd to sweeten my poor name?
> Say all! and all well said, still say the same!

At length, after the usual train of hopes, fears, complaints, and raptures, the lady begins to look with pity and favor on the "ruins of her conquest;" * and he exults in an acknowledged return of love, though her heart be given conditionally,—

> His only, while he virtuous courses takes.

So far Stella appears in a most amiable and captivating light, worthy of the romantic homage of her accomplished lover. But a dark shade steals, like a mildew, over this bright picture of beauty, poetry, and love, even while we gaze upon it. The projected union between Sydney and Lady Penelope was finally broken off by their respective

* Sonnet 54.

families, for reasons which do not appear.* Sir Charles Blount offered himself, and was refused, though evidently agreeable to the lady; and she was married by her guardians to Lord Rich, a man of talents and integrity, but most disagreeable in person and manners, and her declared aversion.

This inauspicious union ended, as might have been expected, in misery and disgrace. Lady Rich bore her fate with extreme impatience. Her warm affections, her high spirit, and her strength of mind, so heroically displayed in behalf of her brother, served but to render her more poignantly sensible of the tyranny which had forced her into detested bonds. She could not forget,—perhaps never wished or sought to forget—that she had received homage of the two most accomplished men of the time,—Sydney and Blount; "and not finding that satisfaction at home she ought to have received, she looked for it abroad where she ought not to find it."

Sydney describes a secret interview which took place between himself and Lady Rich shortly after her marriage. I should have observed, that Sydney

* "All the lords that wish well to the children of the Earl of Essex, and I suppose all the best sorte of the English lords besides, doe expect what will become of the treaty between Mr. Philip and my Lady Penelope. Truly, my Lord, I must say to your lordship, as I have said it to my Lord of Leicester and Mr. Philip, the breaking off this match, if the default be on your parts, will turn to more dishonor than can be repaired with any other marriage in England."—*Letter of Mr. Waterhouse to Sir Henry Sydney, in the Sydney Papers.*

designates himself all through his poems by the name of Astrophel.

> In a grove, most rich of shade,
> Where birds wanton music made,
> May, then young, his pied weeds showing,
> New perfumed with flowers fresh growing,
> Astrophel, with Stella sweet,
> Did to mutual comfort meet;
> Both within themselves opprest,
> But each in the other blest;
> Him great harms had taught much care,
> *Her fair neck a foul yoke bear;*
> But her sight his cares did banish,
> In his sight her yoke did vanish, &c.

He pleads the time, the place, the season, and their divided vows; and would have pressed his suit more warmly,

> But her hand his hands repelling,
> Gave repulse—all grace excelling!
> * * * * *
> Then she spake! her speech was such
> As not ear, but heart did touch,
> "Astrophel, (said she,) my love,
> Cease in these effects to prove!
> Now be still!—yet still believe me,
> Thy grief more than death would grieve me.
> Trust me, while I thus deny,
> In myself the smart I try:
> Tyrant honor doth thus use thee;
> Stella's self might not refuse thee!
> Therefore, dear! this no more move;
> Lest though I leave not thy love,
> (Which too deep in me is framed!)
> *I should blush when thou art named!*

The sentiment he has made her express in the last line is beautiful, and too feminine and appropriate not to have been taken from nature; but, unhappily, it did not always govern her conduct. How far her coquetry proceeded, we do not know. Sydney, about a year afterwards, married the daughter of Secretary Walsingham, and survived his marriage but a short time. This theme of song, this darling of fame, and ornament of his age, perished at the battle of Zutphen, in the very summer of his glorious youth. "He had trod," as the author of the Effigies Poeticæ so beautifully expressed it, "from his cradle to his grave, amid incense and flowers—and died in a dream of glory!"

His death was not only such as became the soldier and Christian;—the natural elegance and sensibility of his mind followed him even to the verge of the tomb: in his last moments, when the mortification had commenced, and all hope was over, he called for music in his chamber, and lay listening to it with tranquil pleasure. Sydney died in his thirty-fourth year.

Among the numerous poets who lamented this deep-felt loss (volumes, I believe, were filled with the tributes paid to his memory,) was Spenser, whom Sydney had early patronized. His elegy, however, is too labored, too lengthy, too artificial, to please altogether, though containing some lines of great beauty. It is singular, and a little incomprehensible to our modern ideas of *bienséance* and good taste, that in his elegy, which Spenser dedi-

cates to Sydney's widow after her remarriage with Essex, he introduces Stella as lamenting over the body of Astrophel, tells us how she beat her fair bosom—"the treasury of joy,"—how she tore her lovely hair, wept out her eyes,—

> And with sweet kisses suckt the parting breath
> Out of his lips.

At length, through excess of grief, or the compassion of the gods, she is changed into the flower, "by some called starlight, by others penthia." This might pass in those days; though, considering all the circumstances, it is strange that, even then, it escaped ridicule.

The tears shed for Sydney, by those nearest and dearest to him, were but too soon dried. His widow was consoled by Essex, and his Stella, by her old lover Mountjoy, who returned from Ireland, flushed with victory and honors, and cast himself again at her feet. Their secret intercourse remained, for several years, undiscovered. Lady Rich, who was tenderly attached to her brother, was guarded in her conduct, fearing equally the loss of his esteem, and the renewal of those hostile feelings which had already caused one duel between Essex and Mountjoy. She had also children; and as all, without exception, lived to be distinguished men and virtuous women, we may give her credit for some attention to their education,—some compunctious visitings of nature on their account.

During her brother's imprisonment, she made the most strenuous, the most persevering efforts to save his life; she besieged Elizabeth with the richest presents, the most eloquent letters of supplication; —she waylaid her at the door of her chamber, till commanded to remain a prisoner in her own house; —she bribed, or otherwise won, all whom she thought could plead his cause;—and when these were of no avail, and Essex perished, she seems, in her despair, to have thrown off all restraint—and at length, fled from the house of her husband.

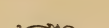
In 1605 she was legally divorced from Lord Rich; and soon after married Mountjoy, then Earl of Devonshire. The marriage of a divorced wife in the lifetime of her first husband, was in those days a thing almost unprecedented in the English court, and caused the most violent outcry and scandal. Laud (the archbishop, then chaplain to the Earl of Devonshire) incurred the censure of the Church for uniting the lovers, and ever after fasted on the anniversary of this fatal marriage. The Earl, one of the most admirable and distinguished men of that chivalrous age, who "felt a stain as a wound," found it impossible to endure the infamy brought on himself and the woman he loved: he died about a year after; "the griefe," says a contemporary, "of this unhappie love brought him to his end."*

His unfortunate Countess lingered but a short

* Memoirs of King James's Peers, by Sir E. Brydges.

time after him, and died in a miserable obscurity. —Such is the history of Sydney's STELLA.

Three of her sons became English Earls; the eldest, Earl of Warwick; the second, Earl of Holland; and the third (her son by Mountjoy) Earl of Newport. The earldoms of Warwick and Holland were held by her lineal descendants, till the death of that young Lord Warwick, whose mother married Addison.



CHAPTER XVII.

COURT AND AGE OF ELIZABETH.

DRAYTON, DANIEL, DRUMMOND, ETC.

THE voluminous Drayton* has left a collection of sonnets under the fantastic title of his IDEAS. Ideas they may be,—but they have neither poetry, nor passion, nor even elegance;—a circumstance not very surprising, if it be true that he composed them merely to show his ingenuity in a style which was then the prevailing fashion of his time. Drayton was never married, and little is known of his private life. He loved a lady of Coventry, to whom he promises an immortality he has not been able to confer.

* Died 1631.

How many paltry, foolish, painted things
That now in coaches trouble every street,
Shall be forgotten, whom no poet sings,
E'er they be well wrapp'd in their winding-sheet;
While I to thee eternity shall give,
When nothing else remaineth of these days,
And Queens hereafter shall be glad to live
Upon the alms of thy superfluous praise;
Virgins and matrons reading these my rhymes,
Shall be so much delighted with thy story,
That they shall grieve they liv'd not in these times,
To have seen thee, their sex's only glory:
So thou shalt fly above the vulgar throng,
Still to survive in my immortal song.

There are fine nervous lines in this sonnet: we long to hail the exalted beauty who is announced by such a flourish of trumpets, and are proportionably disappointed to find that she has neither a local habitation nor a name." Drayton's little song,

I pr'ythee, love! love me no more;
Take back the heart you gave me!

stands unique, in point of style, among the rest of his works, and is very genuine and passionate.

Daniel,* who was munificently patronized by the Lord Mountjoy, mentioned in the preceding sketch, was one of the most graceful sonnetteers of that time; and he has touches of tenderness as well as fancy; for *he* was in earnest, and the object of his attachment was real, though disguised under the name of Delia. She resided on the banks of the

* Died in 1619.

River Avon, and was unmoved by the poet's strains. Rank, with her, outweighed love and genius. Daniel says of his sonnets—

> Though the error of my youth in them appear,
> Suffice they show I lived, and loved thee dear

The lines

> Restore thy tresses to the golden ore,
> Yield Citherea's son those arcs of love,

are luxuriantly elegant, and quite Italian in the flow and imagery. Her modesty is prettily set forth in another Sonnet—

> A modest maid, deck'd with a blush of honor,
> Whose feet do tread green paths of youth and love,
> The wonder of all eyes that looked upon her,
> Sacred on earth, designed a Saint above!

After a long series of sonnets, elaborately plaintive, he interrupts himself with a little touch of truth and nature, which is quite refreshing:

> I must not grieve my love! whose eyes should read
> Lines of delight, whereon her youth might smile;
> The flowers have time before they come to seed,
> And she is young, and now must sport the while.
> And sport, sweet maid! in season of these years,
> And learn to gather flow'rs before they wither;
> And where the sweetest blossom first appears,
> Let Love and Youth conduct thy pleasures thither.

If the lady could have been won by poetical flattery, she must have yielded. At length, unable to bear her obduracy, and condemned to see

another preferred before him, Daniel resolved to travel; and he wrote, on this occasion, the most feeling of all his Sonnets.

And whither, poor forsaken! wilt thou go?

Daniel remained abroad several years, and returning, cured of his attachment, he married Giustina Florio, of a family of Waldenses, who had fled from the frightful persecutions carried on in the Italian Alps against that miserable people. With her, he appears to have been sufficiently happy to forget the pain of his former repulse, and enjoy, without one regretful pang, the fame it had given him as a poet.

Drummond, of Hawthornden,* is yet more celebrated, and with reason. He has elegance, and sweetness, and tenderness; but not the pathos or the passion we might have expected from the circumstances of his attachment, which was as real and deep, as it was mournful in its issue. He loved a beautiful girl of the noble family of Cunningham, who is the Lesbia of his poetry. After a fervent courtship, he succeeded in securing her affections: but she died, "in the fresh April of her years," and when their marriage-day had been fixed. Drummond has left us a most charming picture of his mistress; of her modesty, her retiring sweetness, her accomplishments, and her tenderness for him.

O sacred blush, empurpling cheeks, pure skies
With crimson wings, which spread thee like the morn;

* Died 1649.

O bashful look, sent from those shining eyes;
O tongue in which most luscious nectar lies,
That can at once both bless and make forlorn;
Dear coral lip, which beauty beautifies,
That trembling stood before her words were born;
And you her words—words! no, but golden chains,
Which did enslave my ears, ensnare my soul;
Wise image of her mind,—mind that contains
A power, all power of senses to control;
So sweetly you from love dissuade do me,
That I love more, if more my love can be.

The quaint iteration of the same word through this Sonnet has not an ill effect. The lady was in a more relenting mood when he wrote the Sonnet on her lips, "those fruits of Paradise,"—

I die, dear life! unless to me be given
As many kisses as the Spring hath flowers,
Or there be silver drops in Iris' showers,
Or stars there be in all-embracing heaven;
And if displeased ye of the match remain,
Ye shall have leave to take them back again!

He mentions a handkerchief, which, in the days of their first tenderness, she had embroidered for him, unknowing that it was destined to be steeped in tears for her loss!—In fact, the grief of Drummond on this deprivation was so overwhelming, that he sunk at first into a total despondency and inactivity, from which he was with difficulty roused. He left the scene of his happiness, and his regrets—

Are these the flowery banks? is this the mead
Where she was wont to pass the pleasant hours?
Is this the goodly elm did us o'erspread,
Whose tender rind, cut forth in curious flowers
By that white hand, contains those flames of ours?
Is this the murmuring spring, us music made?
Deflourish'd mead, where is your heavenly hue?

He travelled for eight years, seeking, in change of place and scene, some solace for his wounded peace. There was a kind of constancy even in Drummond's inconstancy; for meeting many years afterwards with an amiable girl, who bore the most striking resemblance to his lost mistress, he loved her for that very resemblance, and married her. Her name was Margaret Logan. I am not aware that there are any verses addressed to her.

Drummond has been called the Scottish Petrarch: he tells us himself, that "he was the first in this Isle who did celebrate a dead mistress,"—and his resemblance to Petrarch, in elegance and sentiment, has often been observed: he resembles him, it is true—but it is as a professed and palpable imitator resembles the object of his imitation.

* * * * *

On glancing back at the age of Elizabeth,—so adorned by masculine talents, in arts, in letters, and in arms,—we are at first surprised to find so few distinguished women. It seems remarkable that a golden epoch in our literature, to which she gave her name, "the Elizabethan age,"—a court in which a female ruled,—a period fruitful

in great poets, should have produced only one or two women who are interesting from their poetical celebrity. Of these, Alice Spenser, Countess of Derby, and Mary Sydney, Countess of Pembroke, (the sister of Philip Sydney) are the most remarkable; the first has enjoyed the double distinction of being celebrated by Spenser in her youth, and by Milton in her age,—almost too much honor for one woman, though she had been a muse, and a grace, and a cardinal virtue, moulded in one. Lady Pembroke has been celebrated by Spenser and by Ben Jonson, and was, in every respect, a most accomplished woman. To these might be added other names, which might have shone aloft like stars, and "shed some influence on this lower world," if the age had not produced two women, so elevated in station, and so every way illustrious by accidental or personal qualities, that each, in her respective sphere, extinguished all the lesser orbs around her. It would have been difficult for any female to seize on the attention, or claim either an historical or poetical interest, in the age of Queen Elizabeth and Mary Stuart.

In her own court, Elizabeth was not satisfied to preside. She could as ill endure a competitor in celebrity or charms, as in power. She arrogated to herself all the incense around her: and, in point of adulation, she was like the daughter of the horse-leech, whose cry was, "Give! give!" Her insatiate vanity would have been ludicrous, if it had not produced such atrocious consequences.

This was the predominant weakness of her character, which neutralized her talents, and was pampered, till in its excess it became a madness and a vice. This precipitated the fate of her lovely rival, Mary, Queen of Scots. This elevated the profligate Leicester * to the pinnacle of favor, and kept him there, sullied as he was by every baseness, and every crime; this hurried Essex to the block; banished Southampton; and sent Raleigh and Elizabeth Throckmorton to the Tower. Did one of her attendants, more beautiful than the rest, attract the notice or homage of any of the gay cavaliers around her,—was an attachment whispered, a marriage projected,—it was enough to throw the whole court into consternation. "Her Majesty, the Queen, was in a passion;" and, then, Heaven help the offenders! It was the spirit of Harry the Eighth let loose again. Yet such is the reflected glory she derives from the Sydneys and the Raleighs, the Walsinghams and Cecils, the Shakspeares and Spensers of her time, that we can scarce look beyond it, to stigmatize the hard, unfeminine egotism of her character.

There was something extremely poetical in her situation, as a maiden queen, raised from a prison to a throne, exposed to unceasing danger from without and treason from within, and supported through all by her own extraordinary talents, and by the devotion of the chivalrous, gallant courtiers

* Leicester's influence over Elizabeth appeared so unaccountable, that it was ascribed to magic, and to her evil stars.

and captains, who paid to her, as their queen and mistress, a homage and obedience they would scarce have paid to a sovereign of their own sex. All this display of talent and heroism, and chivalrous gallantry, has a fine gorgeous effect to the imagination;—but for the woman herself,—as a woman, with her pedantry, and her absurd affection; her masculine temper and coarse insolence; her sharp, shrewish, cat-like face, and her pretension to beauty, it is impossible to conceive any thing more anti-poetical.

> Yet had she praises in all plenteousness
> Pour'd upon her like showers of Castalie.*

She was a favorite theme of the poets of the time, and by right divine of her sceptre and her sex, an object of glorious flattery, not always feigned, even where it was false.

She is the Gloriana of Spenser's Fairy Queen, —she is the "Cynthia, the ladye of the sea,"—she is the "Fair Vestal throned in the West," of Shakspeare—

> That very time I saw, (but thou couldst not,)
> Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
> Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
> At a fair Vestal, throned by the West,
> And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow
> As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
> But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft

* Spenser's Daphnaida.

Quench'd in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon;
And the imperial vot'ress passed on
In maiden meditation, fancy free.

And the previous allusion to Mary of Scotland, as the "Sea Maid on the Dolphin's back,"

Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,

is not less exquisite.

It would, in truth, have been easier for Mary to have calmed the rude sea than her ruder and wilder subjects. These two queens, so strangely misplaced, seem as if, by some sport of destiny, each had dropt into the sphere designed for the other. Mary should have reigned over the Sydneys, the Essexes, the Mountjoys;—and with her smiles, and sweet words, and generous gifts, have inspired and rewarded the poets around her. Elizabeth should have been transferred to Scotland, where she might have bandied frowns and hard names with John Knox, cut off the heads of rebellious barons, and boxed the ears of illbred courtiers.

This is no place to settle disputed points of history, nor, if it were, should I presume to throw an opinion into one scale or the other; but take the two queens as women merely, and with a reference to apparent circumstances, I would rather have been Mary than Elizabeth; I would rather have been Mary, with all her faults, frailties, and mis-

fortunes,—all her power of engaging hearts,—betrayed by her own soft nature, and the vile or fierce passions of the men around her, to die on a scaffold, with the meekness of a saint and the courage of a heroine, with those at her side who would willingly have bled for her,—than I would have been that heartless flirt, Elizabeth, surrounded by the oriental servility, the lip and knee homage of her splendid court; to die at last on her palace floor, like a crushed wasp—sick of her own very selfishness—torpid, sullen, and despairing,—without one friend near her, without one heart in the wide world attached to her by affection or gratitude.

There is more true and earnest feeling in some little verses written by Ronsard on the unhappy Queen of Scots, than in all the elegant, fanciful, but extravagant flattery of Elizabeth's poets. After just mentioning the English Queen, whom he despatches in a single line,—

> Je vis leur belle reine, honnête et virtueuse;

he thus dwells on the charms of Mary:

> Je vis des Ecossais la Reine sage et belle,
> Qui de corps et d'esprits ressemble une immortelle,
> J'approchai de ses yeux, mais bien de deux soleils,
> Deux soleils de beauté, qui n'ont point leurs pareils.
> Je les vis larmoyer d'une claire rosée,
> Je vis d'un clair crystal paupière arrosée,
> Se souvenant de France, et du sceptre laissé,
> Et de son premier feu, comme un songe passé!

And when Mary was a prisoner, he dedicated to her a whole book of poems, in which he celebrates her with a warmth, the more delightful that it was disinterested. He thanks her for selecting his poems to amuse her solitary hours, and adds feelingly,—

> Car, je ne veux en ce monde choisir
> Plus grand honneur que vous donner plaisir!

Mary did not leave her courteous poet unrewarded. She contrived, though a prisoner, to send him a casket containing two thousand crowns, and a vase, on which was represented Mount Parnassus, and a flying Pegasus, with this inscription:—

> A Ronsard, l'Apollon de la source des Muses.

No one understood better than Mary the value of a compliment from a beauty, and a queen; had she bestowed more precious favors with equal effect and discrimination, her memory had escaped some disparagement. Ronsard, we are told, was sufficiently a poet to value the inscription on his vase more than the gold in the casket.

Apropos to Ronsard: the history of his loves is so whimsical and so truly French, that it must claim a place here.

Yet now I am upon French ground, I may as well take the giant's advice, and "begin at the beginning."* It seems at first view unaccountable

* Bélier, mon ami! Commencez par le commencement!
COUNT HAMILTON.

that France, which has produced so many remarkable women, should scarce exhibit one poetical heroine of great or popular interest, since its language and literature assumed their present form; not one who has been rendered illustrious or dear to us by the praises of a poet lover. The celebrity of celebrated French women is, in truth, very antipoetical. The memory of the kiss which Marguerite d'Ecosse * gave to Alain Chartier, has long survived the verses he wrote in her praise. Clement Marot, the court poet of Francis the First, was the lover or rather one of the lovers of Diana of Poictiers, (mistress to the Dauphin, afterwards Henry the Second.) She was confessedly the most beautiful and the most abandoned woman of her time. Marot could hardly have expected to find her a paragon of constancy; yet he laments her fickleness, as if it had touched his heart.

À DIANE.

Puisque de vous je n'ai autre visage,
Je m'en vais rendre hermite en un desert,
Pour prier Dieu, si un autre vous sert,
Qu'autant que moi en votre honneur soit sage.

Adieu! Amour! adieu, gentil corsage!
Adieu ce teint! adieu ces friands yeux!
Je n'ai pas eu de vous grand avantage,—
Un moins aimant aura peut-être mieux.

* 'La gentille Marguerite," the unhappy wife of Louis the Eleventh. Beautiful, accomplished, and in the very spring of life, she died a victim to the detestable character of her husband. When one of her attendants spoke of hope and life, the Queen

In a *liaison* of mere vanity and profligacy, the transition from love (if love it be) to hatred and malignity, is not uncommon—as Spenser says so beautifully,

> Such love might never long endure,
> However gay and goodly be the style,
> That dothe ill cause or evil end enure:
> For Virtue is the band that bindeth hearts most sure!

From being the lady's *lover*, Marot became her satirist; instead of *chansons* in praise of her beauty, he circulated the most biting and insufferable epigrams on her person and character. We are told by one, who, I presume, speaks *avec connaissance de fait*, that a woman's revenge

> Is like the tiger's spring,
> Deadly and quick, and crushing.

Diana was a libelled beauty, all-powerful and unprincipled. Marot, in some moments of gayety and overflowing confidence, had confessed to her that he had eaten meat on a "jour maigre:" he had better in those days have committed all the seven deadly sins; and when the lady revealed his unlucky confession and denounced him as a heretic, he was immediately imprisoned. Instead, however, of being depressed by his situation, or moved to make any concession, he published from his prison a most ludicrous lampoon on his *ci-devant* mis-

turning from her with an expression of deep disgust, exclaimed with a last effort, "Fi de la vie! ne m'en parlez plus!"—and expired.

tress, of which the burden was, "Prenez le, il a mangé le lard!" He afterwards made his escape, and took refuge in the court of Renée, Duchess of Ferrara; and though subsequently recalled to France, he continued to pursue Diana with the most bitter satire, became a second time a fugitive, partly on her account, and died in exile and poverty.*

Marot has been called the French Chaucer. He resembles the English poet in liveliness of fancy, picturesque imagery, simplicity of expression, and satirical humor; but he has these merits in a far less degree; and in variety of genius, pathos, and power, is immeasurably his inferior.

Ronsard, to whom I at length return, was the successor of Marot. In his time, the Italian sonnetteers, as Petrarch, Bembo, Sanazzaro, were the prevailing models, and classical pedantry the prevailing taste. Ronsard, having filled his mind with Greek and learning, determined to be a poet, and

* At Althorp, the seat of Lord Spenser, there is a most curious picture of Diana of Poictiers, once in the Crawford collection: it is a small half-length; the features are fair and regular; the hair is elaborately dressed with a profusion of jewels; but there is no drapery whatever, except a curtain behind: round the head is the legend from the forty-second Psalm,—"Comme le cerf braie après le décours des eaues, ainsi brait mon âme après toi, O Dieu!" which is certainly a most extraordinary and profane application. In the days of Diana of Poictiers, Marot had composed a version of the Psalms, then very popular. It was the fashion to sing them to dance and song tunes; and the courtiers and beauties had each their favorite psalm, which served as a kind of *devise*. This may explain the very singular inscription on this very singular picture.

looked about for a mistress to be the object of his songs: for a poet without a mistress was then an unheard-of anomaly. He fixed upon a beautiful woman of Blois, named Cassandre, whose Greek appellative, it is said, was her principal attraction in his fancy. To her he addressed about two hundred and twenty sonnets, in a style so lofty and pedantic, stuffed with such hard names and philosophical allusions, that the fair Cassandre must have been as wise as her namesake, the daughter of Priam, to have comprehended her own praises.

Ronsard's next love was more interesting. Her name was Marie: she was beautiful and kind: the poet really loved her; and consequently, we find him occasionally descending from his heights of affectation and scholarship, to the language of truth, nature, and tenderness. Marie died young; and among Ronsard's most admired poems are two or three little pieces written after her death. As his works are not commonly met with, I give one as a specimen of his style:—

EPITAPHE DE MARIE.

Ci reposent les os de la belle Marie,
Qui me fit pour un jour quitter mon Vendomois,
Qui m'echauffa le sang au plus verd de mes mois;
Qui fût toute mon tout, mon bien, et mon envie.

En sa tombe repose honneur et courtoisie,
Et la jeune beauté qu'en l'ame je sentois.
Et le flambeau d'Amour, ses traits et son carquois,
Et ensemble mon cœur, mes penées et ma vie.

Tu es, belle Angevine,* un bel astre des cieux;
Les anges, tous ravis, se paissent de tes yeux,
La terre te regrette, O beauté sans seconde!

Maintenant tu es vive, et je suis mort d'annui,
Malheureux qui se fie en l'attente d'autrui:
Trois amis m'ont trompé,—toi, l'amour, et le monde.

Ronsard had by this time acquired a reputation which eclipsed that of all his contemporaries. He was caressed and patronized by Charles the Ninth, (of hateful memory,) who, like Nero, exhibited the revolting combination of a taste for poetry and the fine arts, with the most sanguinary and depraved disposition. Ronsard, having lost his Marie, was commanded by Catherine de' Medicis to select a mistress from among the ladies of her court, to be the future object of his tuneful homage. He politely left her Majesty to choose for him, prepared to fall in love duly at the royal behest: and Catherine pointed out Helène de Surgeres, one of her maids of honor, as worthy to be the second Laura of a second Petrarch. The docile poet, with zealous obedience, warbled the praises of Helène for the rest of his life. He also consecrated to her a fountain near his Château in the Vendomois, which has popularly preserved her name and fame. It is still known as the "Fontaine d'Helène."

Helène was more witty than beautiful, and, though vain of the celebrity she had acquired in the verses of Ronsard, she either disliked him in the

* Ronsard was a native of the Vendomois, and Marie, of Anjou.

character of a lover, or was one of those lofty ladies

> Who hate to have their dignity profaned
> With any relish of an earthly thought.*

She desired the Cardinal du Perron would request Ronsard (in her name) to prefix an epistle to the odes and sonnets addressed to her, assuring the world that this poetical love had been purely Platonic. "Madam," said the Cardinal, "you had better give him leave to prefix your picture." †

I presume my fair and gentle readers (I shall have none, I am sure, who are not one or the other, or both,) are as tired as myself of all this affectation, and glad to turn from it to the interest of passion and reality.

"There is not," says Cowley, "so great a lie to be found in any poet, as the vulgar conceit of men, that lying is essential to good poetry." On the contrary, where there is not truth, there is nothing—

> Rien n' est beau que le vrai,—le vrai seul est amiable!

* * * * *

While the Italian school of amatory verse was flourishing in France, Spain, and England, almost to the extinction of originality in this style, the brightest light of Italian poesy had arisen, and was shining with a troubled splendor over that land of song. How swiftly at the thought does imagina-

* Ben Jonson.

† V Bayle Dictionarie Historique.—Pierre de Ronsard was born in 1524, and died in 1585.

tion shoot "like a glancing star," over the wide expanse of sea and land, and through a long interval of sad and varied years! I am again standing within the porch of the church of San Onofrio, looking down upon the little slab in its dark corner, which covers the bones of TASSO.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LEONORA D'ESTE.

LEONORA D'ESTE, a princess of the proudest house in Europe, might have wedded an emperor, and have been forgotten. The idea, true or false, that she it was who broke the heart and frenzied the brain of Tasso, has glorified her to future ages; has given her a fame, something like that of the Greek of old, who bequeathed his name to immortality, by firing the grandest temple of the universe.

The question of Tasso's attachment to the Princess Leonora, is, I believe, set at rest by the acute researches and judicious reasoning of M. Ginguené, and those who have followed in his steps. A body of circumstantial evidence has been collected, which would not only satisfy a court of love—but a court of law, with a Lord Chancellor, to boot,

"*perpending*," at the head of it. That which was once regarded as a romance, which we wished to believe, if we *could*, is now an established fact, which we cannot disbelieve if we would.

No poet perhaps ever owed so much to female influence as Tasso, or wrote so much under the intoxicating inspiration of love and beauty. He paid most dearly for such inspiration: and yet not *too* dearly. The high tone of sentiment, the tenderness, and the delicacy which pervade all his poems, which prevail even in his most voluptuous descriptions, and which give him such a decided superiority over Ariosto, cannot be owing to any change of manners or increase of refinement produced by the lapse of a few years. It may be traced to the tender influence of two elegant women. He for many years read the cantos of the Gerusalemme, as he composed them, to the Princesses Lucretia and Leonora, both of whom he admired,—one of whom he adored.

Au reste—the kiss, which he is said to have imprinted on the lips of Leonora in a transport of frenzy, as well as the idea that she was the primary cause of his insanity and of his seven years' imprisonment at St. Anne's, rest on no authority worthy of credit; yet it is not less certain that she was the object of his secret and fervent admiration, and that this hopeless passion conspired, with many other causes, to fever his irritable temperament and unsettle his imagination, beyond that "fine madness," which we are told *ought* "to possess the poet's brain"

When Tasso first visited Ferrara, in 1565, he was just one-and-twenty, with all the advantages which a fine countenance, a majestic figure, (for he was tall even among the tallest,) noble birth, and exceeding talents could bestow: he was already distinguished as the author of the Rinaldo, his earliest poem, in which he had celebrated (as if prophetically) the Princesses d'Este,—and chiefly Leonora.

> Lucrezia Estense, e l' altra i cui crin d' oro,
> Lacci e reti saran del casto amore.*

When Tasso was first introduced to her in her brother's court, Leonora was in her thirtieth year; a disparity of age which is certainly no argument against the passion she inspired. For a young man, at his first entrance into life, to fall in love ambitiously—with a woman, for instance, who is older than himself, or with one who is, or ought to be, unattainable,—is a common occurrence. Tasso, from his boyish years, had been the sworn servant of beauty. He tells us, in grave prose, "che la sua giovanezza fu tutta sotto-posta all' amorose leggi;"† but he was also refined, even to fastidiousness, in his intercourse with women. He had formed, in his own poetical mind, the most exalted idea of what a female ought to be, and unfortu-

* See the Rinaldo, c. 8.

† ——— From my very birth
My soul was drunk with love, &c.
LAMENT OF TASSO.

nately, she who first realized all his dreams of perfection, was a Princess—"there seated where he durst not soar." Leonora was still eminently lovely, in that soft, artless, unobtrusive style of beauty, which is charming in itself, and in a princess irresistible, from its contrast with the loftiness of her station and the trappings of her rank. Her complexion was extremely fair; her features small and regular; and the form of her head peculiarly graceful, if I may judge from a fine medallion I once saw of her in Italy. Ill health, and her early acquaintance with the sorrows of her unfortunate mother, had given to her countenance a languid and pensive cast, and sicklied all the natural bloom of her complexion; but "Paleur, qui marque une ame tendre, a bien son prix:" so Tasso thought; and this "vago Pallore," which vanquishes the rose, and makes the dawn ashamed of her blushes," he has frequently and beautifully celebrated; as in the pretty Madrigal—

Vita della mia Vita!
O Rosa scolorta! &c.

and in those graceful lines,

Languidetta beltà vinceva amore, &c.

applicable only to Leonora. Her eyes were blue; her mouth of peculiar beauty, both in form and expression. In the seventh Sonnet, "Bella è la donna mia," he says it was the most lovely feature

in her face; in another still finer,* he styles this exquisite mouth "a crimson shell"—

> Purpurea conca, in cui si nutre
> Candor di perle elette e pellegrine;

and he concludes it with one of those disguises under which he was accustomed to conceal Leonora's name.

> E di sì degno cor tuo stra LEONORA.

She was negligent in her dress, and studious and retired in her habits, seldom joining in the amusements of her brother's court, then the gayest and most magnificent in Italy.† Her accomplished and unhappy mother, Renée of France,‡ had early instilled into her mind a love of literature, and especially of poetry. She was passionately fond of music, and sang admirably. One of Tasso's most beautiful sonnets was composed on some occasion when her physician had forbidden her to sing. He who had so often felt the magic of that enchanting voice, thus describes its power and laments his loss:—

> Ahi, ben è reo destin, ch' invidia, e toglie
> Almondo il suon de' vostri chiari accenti,

* Rose, che l' arte invidiosa mira, &c.

† Alteremente umile
Te chiundi ne' tuoi cari alti soggiorni.

‡ The daughter of Louis XII. She was closely imprisoned during twelve years, on suspicion of favoring the early reformers.

Onde addivien che le terrene genti
De' maggior pregi, impoverisca e spoglie.

Ch' ogni nebbia mortal, che 'l senso accoglie,
Sgombrar potea dalle più fosche menti
L' armonìa dolce, e bei pensieri ardenti
Spirar d' onore, e pure e nobil voglie.

Ma non si merta qui forse cotanto:
E basta ben che i sereni occhi, e 'l risc.
N' infiammin d' un piacer celeste e santo

Nulla fora più bello il Paradiso,
Se 'l mondo udisse, in voi d' angelo il canto,
Siccome vede in voi d' angelo il viso.

" O cruel—O envious destiny, that hast deprived the world of those delicious accents, that hast made earth poor in what was dearest and sweetest! No cloud ever gathered over the gloomiest mind, which the melody of that voice could not disperse; it breathed but to inspire noble thoughts and chaste desires.—But, no! it was more than mortals could deserve to possess. Those soft eyes, that smile were enough to inspire a sacred and sweet delight. —Nor would Paradise any longer excel this earth, if in your voice we heard an angel sing, as we behold an angel's beauty in your face!"

Leonora, to a sweet-toned voice, added a gift, which, unless thus accompanied, loses half its value, and almost all its charm—she spoke well; and her eloquence was so persuasive, that we are told she had power to move her brother Alphonso, when none else could. Tasso says most poetically,

E l' aura del parlar cortese e saggio,
Fra le rose spirar, s' udia sovente;

—meaning—for to translate literally is scarce possible,—that "eloquence played round ıer lips, like the zephyr breathing over roses."

"I (he adds,) beholding a celestial beauty walk the earth, closed my eyes in terror, exclaiming, O rashness! O folly! for any to dare to gaze on such charms! Alas! I quickly perceived that this was my least peril. My heart was touched through my ears, her gentle wisdom penetrated deeper than her beauty could reach."

With what emotions must a young and ardent poet have listened to his own praises from a beautiful mouth, thus sweetly gifted! and it may be added that Leonora's eloquence, and the influence she possessed over her brother, were ever employed in behalf of the deserving and unfortunate. The good people of Ferrara had such an exalted idea of her piety and benevolence, that when an earthquake caused a terrible inundation of the Po, and the destruction of the surrounding villages, they attributed the safety of their city entirely to her prayers and intercession.

Leonora then was not unworthy of her illustrious conquest, either in person, heart, or mind. To be summoned daily into the presence of a Princess thus beautiful and amiable, to read aloud his verses to her, to hear his own praises from her lips, to bask in her approving smiles, to associate with her in her retirement, to behold her in all the graceful

simplicity of her familiar life,—was a dangerous situation for Tasso, and surely not less so for Leonora herself. That she was aware of his admiration, and perfectly understood his sentiments, and that a mysterious intelligence existed between them, consistent with the utmost reverence on his part, and the most perfect delicacy and dignity on hers, is apparent from the meaning and tendency of innumerable passages scattered through his minor poems—too significant in their application to be mistaken. Though that application be not avowed, and even disguised—the very disguise, when once detected, points to the object. Leonora knew, as well as her lover, that a princess "was no love-mate for a bard." She knew far better than her lover, until *he* too had been taught by wretched experience, the haughty and implacable temper of her brother Alphonso, who never was known to brook an injury or forgive an offender. She must have remembered too well the twelve years' imprisonment and the narrow escape from death, of her unfortunate mother for a less cause. She was of a timid and reserved nature, increased by the extreme delicacy of her constitution. Her hand had frequently been sought by princes and nobles, whom she had uniformly rejected at the risk of displeasing her brother; and the eyes of a jealous court were upon her. Tasso, on the other hand, was imprudent, hot-headed, fearless, ardently attached. For both their sakes, it was necessary for Leonora to be guarded and reserved, unless she would have

made herself the fable of all Italy. And in what glowing verse has Tasso described all the delicious pain of such a situation! now proud of his fetters, now execrating them in despair. In allusion to his ambitious passion, he is Phaeton, Icarus, Tantalus, Ixion.

Se d' Icàro leggesti e di Fetonte, &c.

But though presumption flung to ruin Icarus and Phaeton, did not the power of love bring even Dian down "from her amazing height?"

E che non puote
Amor, che con catena il ciel unisce?
Egli giù trae delle celeste rote
Di terrana beltà Diana accesa,
E d'Ida il bel Fanciul* al' ciel rapisce.

This at least is *clearly* significant, however poetical the allusions; but what a world of passion and of meaning breathes through the Sonnet which he has entitled "The constrained Silence," ("*Il Silenzio Imposto.*")

"She is content that I should love her; yet, O what hard restraint of galling silence has she imposed!"

Vuol che l' ami costei; ma duro freno
Mi pone ancor d' aspro silenzio; or quale
Avrò da lei, se non conosce il male
O medecina, e refrigerio almeno?
* * * * *

* Ganymede.

Tacer ben posso, e tacerò! ch' io toglia
Sangue alle piaghe, e luce al vivo foco
Non brami già; questa e impossibil voglia
Troppo spinse pungenti a dentro i colpi,
E troppo ardore accolse in picciol loco:
S' apparirà, natura, e sè n' incolpi.*

"Yes, I can, I will keep silence; but to command that the wound shall not bleed nor the fire burn, is to command impossibility. Too, too deep hath the blow been struck; too ardently glows the flame; and if betrayed, the fault is in nature—not in me!"

And again, what can be more exquisitely tender, more beautiful in its fervent simplicity of expression, than the effusion which follows? How miserably does an adequate prose translation halt after the glowing poetry, the rhythmical music, the "linked sweetness" of the original!

Io non cedo in amar, Donna gentile
A' chi mostra di fuor l' interno affetto;
Perchè 'l mio si nasconda in mezzo 'l petto,
Nè co' fior s' apra del mio nuovo Aprile,

Co' vaghi sguardi, e col sembiante umile,
Co' detti sparsi in variando aspetto
Altri si veggia al vostro amor soggetto,
E co' sospiri, e con leggiadro stile.

E quando gela il cielo, e quando infiamma,
E quando parte il sole, e quando riede,
Vi segua; come il can selvaggia damma.

* Sonnet 37.

Ch' io se nel cor vi cerco, altri nol vede,
E sol mi vanto di nascosa fiamma,
E sol mi glorio di secreta fede.*

"I yield not in love, O gentlest lady! to those who dare to show their love more openly, though I conceal it within the centre of my heart, nor suffer it to spread forth like the other flowers of my spring. Let others boast themselves subjects of love for your sake, and slaves of your beauty, with admiring looks, with humble aspect, with sighs, with eloquent words, with lofty verse! whether the winter freeze or the summer burn,—at set of sun, and when he laughs again in heaven, let them still pursue you, as dogs the shy and timid deer. But I —O, I seek you in my own heart, where none else behold you! My hidden love be my only boast; my secret faith, my own glory!"

Without multiplying quotations, which would extend this sketch from pages into volumes, it is sufficient to trace through Tasso's verses the little incidents which varied this romantic intercourse. The frequent indisposition of Leonora, her absence when she went to visit her brother, the Cardinal d'Este, at Tivoli, form the subjects of several beautiful little poems; as the Sonnets

Dianzi al vostro languir, &c.
Donna! poichè fortuna empia mi nega
Seguirvi, &c.
Al nobil colle, ove in antichi marmi
Di Greco mano opre famose ammira
Vaga Leonora il mio pensier mi gira.

* Sonnet 29.

Here he names her expressly; while in the little lament—

> Lunge da voi, ben mio!
> Non ho vita ne core! e non son io
> Non sono, oimè! non sono
> Quel ch' altra volta fui, ma un Ombra mesta,
> Un lagrimevol suono, &c.

—the tone is too passionate to allow of it. He finds her looking up one night at the stars; it is sufficient to inspire that beautiful little song,

> Mentre, mia stella, miri
> I bei celesti giri,
> Il cielo esser vorrei,
> Perchè negli occhi mici
> Fiso tu rivolgessi
> Le tue dolci faville;
> Io vagheggiar potessi
> Mille bellezze tue, con luci mille! *

He relates, in another little madrigal, that standing alone with her in a balcony, he chanced, perhaps in the eagerness of conversation, to extend his arm on hers. He asks pardon for the freedom, and she replies with sweetness, "You offended not by placing your arm there, but by withdrawing it." This little speech in a coquette would have been *sans consequence:* from such a woman as Leonora, it spoke volumes; and her lover felt it so.

* I am told the original idea is in Plato; prettier, however, than either, was the speech of a modern lover, whose mistress was gazing pensively on a star: "Ne la regardez pas tant, chère amie!—je ne puis pas te la donner!"

He breaks forth in a rapture at the tender condescension,

O parolette amorose, &c.

Then comes a cloud, but whether of temper or jealousy, we know not. One of those luckless trifles, perhaps,

—that move
Dissension between hearts that love.

Tasso accompanied Lucrezia d'Este, then Duchess of Urbino, to her villa of Castel Durante, where he remained for some time, partaking in all the amusements of her gay court, without once seeing Leonora. He then wrote to her, and the letter fortunately has been preserved entire.

Though guarded in expression, it is throughout in the tone of a lover piqued, and yet conscious that he has himself offended; and seeking, with a sort of proud humility, the reconciliation on which his happiness depends. He sends her a sonnet, which he admits is "far unlike the elegant effusions he supposes her now in the habit of receiving. He begs to assure her, that though it be in art and wit as poor as he is himself in happiness, yet in his present pitiable condition, he could do no better; (not that he was to all appearance so very much to be pitied.) He adds, "do not think, however, that in this vacancy of thought, my heart has found leisure for love. The Sonnet is merely composed at the request of a certain poor lover, who has for some time past quarrelled with his mistress and

now no longer able to endure his hard fortune, is obliged to yield, and sue for grace and pardon." "Il quale essendo stato un pezzo in colera con la sua donna, ora non potendo più bisogna che si renda e che dimanda mercè." The Sonnet enclosed in this letter, ("Sdegno, debil Guerrier,") appears to me one of the least pleasing in the collection; as if his genius and his feelings were both under some benumbing influence when he wrote it.

In the meanwhile, there was a report that Leonora was about to be united to a foreign Prince. Her hand had been demanded of her brother with the usual formalities. On this occasion Tasso wrote the fine Canzone,

Amor, tu vedi, e non hai duolo o sdegno, &c.

"Love! canst thou look on without grief or indignation, to see my gentle lady bow her fair neck to the yoke of another?"

The expression in the 6th strophe is very unequivocal—

"Nor let my mistress, though she suffer her bosom to be invaded by a newer flame, forget the *former* bond."

Nè la mia Donna, perchè scaldi il petto
Di nuovo amore, nodo *antico* sprezzi.

In one of his Sonnets, this jealous pain is yet more strongly expressed:—

Io sparso, ed altri miete! &c.

"I sow, another reaps! I water a lovely blossom, unworthy, alas! to tend it; and another gathers the fruit. O rage!—yet must I, through coward fear, lock my grief within my own bosom!" &c.

This intended marriage never took place; and Tasso, relieved from his fears, and restored to the confidence of Leonora, was again comparatively blessed. He sometimes ventured to name her openly in his poems,—as in the little Madrigal,

> Cantava in riva al fiume
> Tirse di LEONORA,
> E rispondean le selve, e l'onde, *onora.*

Sometimes he disguised her name as l'Aurora, l'Aura, Onor, le onora,*

> Dell' Onor simulacro e 'l nome vostro.

To these the preceding Madrigal is a sort of *key*, or the better to conceal the true object of his adoration, he carried his apparent homage, and often his poetical gallantry, to the feet of other fair ladies. Lucretia d'Este, the elder sister of Leonora; Tarquinia Molza, a beauty and a poetess; and Lucretia Bendidio, another most accomplished woman, who numbered all the poets and literati of Ferrara in her train, frequently inspired him.

* The Canzone which is, I believe, esteemed the finest of those addressed to Leonora,

> Mentre ch' a venerar muovon le gente,

concludes with this play upon her name—

> Costei LE ONORA col bel nome santo.
> She does them HONOR by her sacred name.

The mention of Lucretia Bendidio reminds me of an incident in Tasso's early life, which, besides being characteristic of his times and genius, is extremely *apropos* to my present purpose and subject. In the days of his first enthusiasm for Lucretia, when he and Guarini were rivals for her favor, he undertook to maintain, publicly, fifty *theses*, or difficult questions, in the "Science of Love." These "Conclusioni amorosi" may be found in the third volume of the great folio edition of his works; and some of them, it must be confessed, afforded matter for much amusing and edifying discussion; for instance,—"Amore esser più nell' amata che nell' amante," "that love exists rather in the person beloved than in the lover," which seems to involve a nice distinction in metaphysics: and "Nessuna amata essere, o poter essere ingrata,"—"that no woman truly beloved, is or can be ungrateful," which involves a mystery—and a truth. And the 48th, "Se più si patisca, o non ricevendo alcun premio, o ricevendo minor del desiderio,"—"whether in love, it be harder to receive no recompense whatever, or less than we desire,"—a question so difficult to settle, and so depending on individual feeling, that it should have been put to the vote. Others prove, that whatever was the practice in those days, the received and philosophical theory of love was sublime enough; for instance, the 14th, "That the more love is regulated by reason, the more noble it is in its nature." (Agreed to, with exceptions, of which Tasso himself might furnish

the most prominent.) That "compassion in our sex is never a sign of reciprocal affection, but the contrary." (True, generally.) The 34th, "That the respect of the lover for her he loves increases the value and delight of every favor she grants him." (I think this must have passed undisputed, or by acclamation.)

The 38th of these curious propositions, "L'uomo in sua natura amar più intentamente e stabilmente che la donna,"—that "men by nature love more intensely and more permanently than women," was opposed by Signora Orsolina Cavaletta, a woman of singular accomplishments, and who displayed, in defence of her sex, so much wit and talent, such various learning, ingenuity, and eloquence, that the young disputant, perhaps placed in a dilemma between his honor and his gallantry, came very hardly off. This singular exhibition continued for three days, and was conducted with infinite solemnity, in presence of the Court and the Princesses; all the nobility and even the superior clergy of Ferrara crowded to witness it; and I doubt whether any lecture at the British Institution, or mathematics, or electricity, or geology, was ever listened to by our fair bas-bleus with half as much interest as Tasso's "Fifty Theses on Love" excited at Ferrara.

Several years after his first introduction to Leonora d'Este, and after some of the most impassioned and least ambiguous of his verses were written, the Court of Ferrara was embellished by the arrival of

two of the most beautiful women in all Italy,—Leonora di Sanvitali, Countess of Scandiano, then a youthful bride, and her not less lovely mother-in-law, Barbara, Countess of Sala. The Countess of Scandiano is the *other* LEONORA who has puzzled all the biographers, from the open gallantry and avowed adoration with which Tasso has celebrated her; but in strains,—O how different from the sentiment, the veneration, the tenderness, and the mystery which breathe through his verses to Leonora d'Este! A third Leonora was said to exist in the person of the Countess's favorite attendant; but this is untrue. The name of Leonora's waiting-maid was Laura. Tasso has addressed several little poems to her; and there can be no doubt that she occasionally served as a blind to his real attachment for her mistress. The countess of Scandiano's attendant was the fair Olympia, to whom is addressed that exquisitely graceful Canzone,

O con le Grazie elette, e con gli amori.

The Duchess of Ferrara's maid, the beautiful Livia d'Arco, and even her dwarf, are also immortalized in Tasso's verses, who poured forth his courtly gallantry with an exhaustless and splendid prodigality, fitting their praises to his lyre, as if it had never resounded to higher themes.

At a court festival given by the Duke Alphonso, in honor of his beautiful and illustrious visitors, the Countess of Sala appeared with her fine hair wreathed round her head in the form of a coronet,

which with her grand style of beauty and majestic deportment, gave her the air of a Juno. The young Countess of Scandiano, on the other hand, enchanted by her Hebe-like graces, her smiles, and the unequal beauty of a pouting under-lip;—nothing was talked of at Ferrara but these braided tresses and this lovely lip; the poets and the young cavaliers were divided into parties on the occasion. Tasso has celebrated both with the same voluptuous elegance of style in which he described his Armida. To the Countess of Scandiano he wrote,

> Quel labbro, che le rose han colorito
> Molle si sporge, e tumidetto in fuore, &c.

To the Countess of Sala,

> Barbara! maraviglia de' tempi nostri.

But the Countess of Scandiano was more especially the object of his public adoration. It was a poetical passion, openly professed; and flattering, as it appears, both to the lady and to her husband, without in any degree implicating either her discretion or that of Tasso. Compare his verses to this young Countess—this *peregrina Fenice*,* as he fancifully styles her, who comes shining forth, not *to be consumed*, but *to consume*,—to the profound tenderness, the intense yet mournful feeling of some of the poems composed for the Princess d'Este, about the same time; when he must have daily

* "Foreign Phœnix."

contrasted the rich bloom, the smiling eyes, and sparkling graces of the youthful Countess, with the fading or faded beauty, the languid form, and pale cheek of his long-loved Leonora. See particularly the Sonnet

Tre gran Donne vid' io, &c.

"Three illustrious ladies did I behold,—I sung them all—*one only* I loved," &c. And another, equally beautiful and significant,

Perchè 'n giovenil volto amor mi mostri
Talor, Donna *Real*, rose e ligustri
Oblio non pone in me, de' miei trilustri
Affanni, o de miei spesi indarno inchiostri.

E 'l cor, che s' invaghi degli onor vostri
Da prima, e vostro fu poscia più lustri
Reserba, amo in sè forme più illustri
Che perle e gemme, e bei coralli ed ostri.

Queste egli in suono di sospir sì chiari
Farrebbe udir, che d' amorosa face
Accenderebbe i più gelati cori.

Ma oltre suo costume è fatto avaro
De' vostri pregi, suoi dolci tesori,
Che in se medesmo gli vagheggia e *tace!*

TRANSLATION.

"Albeit in younger faces Love at times
May show me where a fresher rose is set,
Yet, *Royal* Lady, can I not forget
My fifteen years of pain and useless rhymes.
This heart, so touch'd by all thy beauty bright,
After so many years is still thine own,

And still retaineth forms more exquisite
Than pearls, or purple gems, or coral stone.
All this my heart in soft sighs would make known,
And thus with fire the coldest bosom fill,
But that unlike itself, that heart hath grown
So covetous of thy sweet charms and thee,
(Its secret treasures,) that it aye doth flee
Inwards, and dwells upon them, and is still.*

Lastly, that most perfect Sonnet, so well known and so celebrated, that I should not insert it here, but that I am enabled to give, for the first time, a translation equally faithful to the sentiment and the poetry of the original.

Negli anni acerbi tuoi, purpurea rosa
Sembravi tu, ch' ai rai tepidi, all' ora
Non apre 'l sen, ma nel suo verde ancora
Verginella s' asconde, e vergognosa.

O più tosto parei (che mortal cosa,
Non s' assomiglia a te) celeste Aurora,
Che le campagne imperla, e i monti indora
Lucida in ciel sereno e rugiadosa.

Or la men verde età nulla a te toglie;
Ne te, benche negletta, in manto adorno
Giovinetta belta vince, o pareggia.

Cosi più vago è 'l fior, poichè le foglie
Spiega odorate: e 'l sol nel mezzo giorno
Viè-più, che nel mattin, luce e fiammeggia.

TRANSLATION.

" Thou, in thy unripe years, wast like the rose,
Which shrinketh from the summer dawn, afraid,

* Translated by a friend.

And with her green veil, like a bashful maid,
Hideth her bosom sweet, and scarcely blows:
Or rather,—(for what shape ever arose
From the dull earth like thee,) thou didst appear
Heavenly Aurora, who, when skies are clear,
Her dewy pearls o'er all the country sows.
Time stealeth nought: thy rare and careless grace
Surpasseth still the youthful bride when neatest,—
Her wealth of dress, her budding blooming face,
So is the full-blown rose for age the sweetest,
So doth the mid-day sun outshine the morn,
With rays more beautiful and brighter born!"*

Yet all this was too little. His minor lyrics, the unlabored and spontaneous effusions of leisure, of fancy, of sentiment, would have been glory enough for any other poet, and fame enough for any other woman: but Tasso had founded his hopes of immortality on his great poem, The Jerusalem Delivered; and it was imperfect in his eyes unless Leonora were shrined in it. To convert the pale, gentle, elegant invalid into a heroine, seemed impossible: she was no model for his lovely amazon, Clorinda; nor his exquisite sorceress, Armida; nor his love-sick Erminia: for her, therefore, and to her honor, and to the eternal memory of his love for her, he composed the episode in the second Canto, where we have her portrait at full length as Sophronia.

Vergine era fra lor, di gia matura
Verginità, d' alta pensieri e regi,

* Translated by a friend.

D' alta Beltà; ma sua beltà non cura,
O tanto sol quant' onestà sen fregi;
E 'l suo pregio maggior che tra le mura
D' angusta casa, asconde i suoi gran pregi:
E da' vagheggiatori ella s' invola,
Alle lodi, agli sguardi, inculta e sola.

Non sai ben dir s' adorno, o se negletta,
Se caso od arte, il bel volto compose,
Di natura, d' amor, di cieli amici,
Le negligenze sue sono artsfici.

Mirata da ciascun, passa, e non mira
L' altera Donna!

TRANSLATION.

" Among them dwelt a noble maid, matured
In loveliness, of thoughts serene and high,
And loftiest beauty;—beauty which herself
Esteem'd not more than modesty might own.
Within a humble dwelling did she hide
Her peerless charms, and shunning lovers' eyes,
From flattering words and glances, lived retired.

Whether 'tis curious care, or sweet neglect,
Or chance, or art, that have array'd her thus,
One scarce can tell: for each unstudied grace
Has been the work of Nature, heaven, and love.

And thus admired by all, unheeding all,
Forth steps the noble maid.

It is impossible to mistake, in this finished and exquisite portrait, the matured beauty, the negligent attire, and love of solitude which characterized Leonora: the resemblance was so perfect, as to be

universally recognized and acknowledged. But it is not, as M. Ginguené remarks, equally certain that Tasso has portrayed himself as Olindo?

> E che modesto è, com' essa è bella,
> Brama assai, poco spera, nulla chiede!
>
> He, full of modesty and truth,
> Loved much, hoped little, and desired nought!

Has he not in the verse

> Ed o mia morte avventurosa appiena,

breathed forth all the smothered passion of his soul?—

> Ed o mia morte avventurosa appiena!
> Oh fortunati miei dolci martiri!
> S'impetrerò che giunto seno a seno
> L'anima mia nella tuo bocca io spiri,
> E venendo tu meco a un tempo meno
> In me fuor mandi gli ultimi sospiri!
>
> And O! how happy were my death! how blest
> These tortures,—could I but the meed obtain,
> That breast to breast, and lip to lip, our souls
> Might flee together, and our latest sighs
> Mingle in death.

This episode is critically a defect in the poem: it seems to stand alone, unconnected in any way with the main action; he acknowledged this; but he absolutely, and obstinately, refused to alter it, or strike it out. He, who was in general amenable to criticism, even to a degree of weakness, willed

that it should stand an everlasting monument of his tenderness, and of the virtues and the charms of her who inspired it:—and thus it has been.

A cruel, and as I think, a most unjust imputation rests on the memory of the Princess Leonora. She is accused of cold-heartedness, in suffering Tasso to remain so long imprisoned, without interceding in his favor or even vouchsafing any reply to his affecting supplications for release, and for her mediation in his behalf. The excuse alleged by those who would fain excuse her,—"That she feared to compromise herself by any interference," is ten times worse than the accusation itself. But though there exists, I suppose, no *written* proof that Leonora pleaded the cause of Tasso, or sought to mitigate his sufferings; neither is there any proof of the contrary. We know little, or rather nothing of the private intrigues of Alphonso's palace: we have no "mémoires secrètes" of that day; no diaries kept by prying courtiers, to enlighten us on what passed in the recesses of the royal apartments: and upon mere negative presumption, shall we brand the character of a woman, who appears on every other occasion so blameless, so tender-hearted, and beneficent, with the imputation of such barbarous selfishness? for the honor of our sex, and human nature, I must believe it impossible.

In no other instance was the homage which Tasso loved to pay to high-born beauty repaid with ingratitude; all his life seems to have been an

object of affectionate interest to women. They, in his misery, stood not aloof, but ministered to him the oil and balm, which soothed his vexed and distempered spirit. The Countesses of Sala and Scandiano never forgot him. Lucretia Bendidio, who had married into the Marchiavelli family, sent him in his captivity all the consolation she could bestow, or he receive. The Duchess of Urbino (Lucretia d'Este) was munificently kind to him. The young Princess of Mantua, she for whom he wrote his "Torrismondo," loaded him with courtesy and proofs of her regard. He was ill at the Court of Mantua, after his release from Ferrara; and her exertions to procure him a copy of Euripides, which he wished to consult, (an anecdote cited somewhere, as a proof of the rarity of the book at that time,) is also a proof of the interest and attention with which she regarded him. It happened when he was at the Court of the Duke of Urbino, that he had to undergo a surgical operation; and the sister of the Duke, the young and beautiful Lavinia di Rovera, prepared the bandages, and applied them with her own fair and princely hands; —a little instance of affectionate interest, which Tasso has himself commemorated. If then we do not find Leonora publicly appearing as the benefactress of Tasso, and using her influence over her brother in his behalf, is it not a presumption that she was implicated in his punishment? What comfort or kindness she could have granted, must, under such circumstances, have been bestowed

with infinite precaution; and, from gratitude and discretion, as carefully concealed. We know, that after the first year of his confinement, Tasso was removed to a less gloomy prison; and we know that Leonora died a few weeks afterwards; but what share she might have had in procuring this mitigation of his suffering we do not know; nor how far the fate of Tasso might have affected her so as to hasten her own death. If we are to argue upon probabilities, without any preponderating proof, in the name of womanhood and charity, let it be on the side of indulgence; let us not believe Leonora guilty, but upon such authority as never has been,—and I trust never can be produced.

* * * * *

About two years after the completion of the Jerusalem Delivered, and four years after the first representation of Aminta, when all Europe rung with the poet's fame, Tasso fled from the Court of Ferrara, in a fit of distraction. His frenzy was caused partly by religious horrors and scruples; partly by the petty but accumulated injuries which malignity and tyranny had heaped upon him; partly by a long-indulged and hopeless passion; and with these, other moral and physical causes combined. He fled, to hide himself and his sorrows in the arms of his sister Cornelia. The brother and sister had not met since their childish years; and Tasso, wild with misery, forlorn, and penniless, knew not what reception he was to meet with. When arrived within a league of his birthplace,

Sorrento,* he changed clothes with a shepherd, and in this disguise appeared before his sister, as one sent with tidings of her brother's misfortunes. The recital, we may believe, was not coldly given. Cornelia, who appears to have inherited with the personal beauty, the sensibility and strong domestic affections of her mother, Portia,† was so violently agitated by the eloquence of the feigned messenger, that she fainted away; and Tasso was obliged to hasten the denouement by discovering himself. In the same moment he was clasped in her affectionate arms, and bathed with her tears. How often, when I have stood on my balcony at Naples, have I looked towards the white buildings of Sorrento, glittering afar upon the distant promontory, and thought upon this scene! and felt, how that which is already surpassingly beautiful to the eye, may be hallowed to the imagination by such remembrances as these!

Tasso resided with his sister for three years, the object of her unwearied and tender attention. It was on his return to Ferrara, (recalled, as Manso says, by the tenor of Leonora's letters,‡) that he was imprisoned as a lunatic at St. Anne's. They show to travellers the cell in which he was con-

* Near Naples: thus, in his pathetic Canzone on himself,—

Sassel la gloriosa alma Sirena
Appresso il cui sepolcro, ebbi la cuna!

† The wife of Bernardo Tasso. See an account of her in Black's Life of Tasso.

‡ Manso, Vita di T. Tasso.

fined. Over the entrance of the gallery leading to it, is written up in large letters, "Ingresso alla Prigione di Torquato Tasso," as if to blazon, in the eye of the stranger, what is at once the renown and disgrace of that fallen city. The cell itself is small, dark, and low. The abhorred grate,

> Marring the sunbeams with its hideous shade,

is a semi-circular window, strongly cross-barred with iron; it looks into a court-yard, so built up, if I remember rightly, that the noonday sun could scarce reach it. Even without the hallowed associations connected with the spot, it would have chilled and saddened me. With them, the very air had a suffocating weight; and the cold dark wall, and low-bowed roof, struck a shivering awe through the blood. Upon the plaster outside the grated window, I observed several names written in pencil; among the rest, those of Byron and Rogers. I must observe here, that the "Lament of Tasso" is, in fact, a canto taken from Tasso's minor poems. Almost every sentiment there expressed, may be found in the Italian; but the soul of the poet has been transfused with such a glowing impulse into its new mould, it never seems to have been adapted to another; the precious metal is the same, only the impress is different, and it has been stamped by a kindred and a master spirit. Lord Byron says,

> Yes, Leonora! it shall be our fate
> To be entwined forever; but too late!

Tasso had said, that his name and that of Leonora should be united and soar to fame together.

"Ella à miei versi, ed io
Circondava al suo nome altere piume,
E l' un per l'altro andò volando a prova;"

—and a long list of corresponding passages and sentiments might easily be pointed out.

The inscription on the door of Tasso's cell, *lies*, I believe, like many other inscriptions. Tasso was *not* confined in this cell for seven years; but here it was that he addressed that affecting Canzone to Leonora and her sister Lucrezia, which begins "Figlie di Renata,"—"Daughters of Renée!" Thus in the very commencement, by this delicate and tender apostrophe, bespeaking their compassion, by awakening the remembrance of their mother, like him so long a wretched prisoner. He reminds them of the years he spent at their side—"their noble servant and their dear companion,"

Gli anni miei tra voi spese,—
Qual son,—qual fui,—che chiedo—ove mi trovo! *

He was, after the first year, removed to a larger cell, with better accommodations. Here he made a collection of his smaller poems lately written, and dedicated them to the two Princesses. But Leonora was no longer in a state to be charmed by the verses, or flattered or touched by the admiring devotion of her lover,—her poet,—her faithful ser-

* Part of this Canzone has been elegantly translated by Mr. Wiffen, in his Life of Tasso, p. 83.

vant: she was dying. A slow and cureless disease preyed on her delicate frame, and she expired in the second year of Tasso's imprisonment. When the news of her danger was brought to him, he requested his friend Pignarola to kiss her hand in his name, and ask her whether there was any thing which, in his sad state, he could do for her ease or pleasure? We do not know how this tender message was received or answered; but it was too late. Leonora died in February, 1581, after lingering from the November previous.

Thus perished, of a premature decay, the woman who had been for seventeen years the idol of a poet's imagination,—the worship of a poet's heart; she who was not unworthy of being enshrined in the rich tracery-work of sweet thoughts and bright fancies she had herself suggested. The love of Tasso for the Princess Leonora might have appeared, in his own time, something like the "desire of the night-moth for the star!" but what is it *now?* what was it *then* in the eyes of her whom he adored? How far was it permitted, encouraged, repaid in secret? This we cannot know; and perhaps had we lived at the time,—in the very Court, and looked daily into her own soft eyes, practised to conceal,—we had been no wiser. Yet one more observation.

When Leonora died, all the poets of Ferrara pressed forward with the usual tribute of elegy and eulogium; but the voice of Tasso was not heard among the rest. He alone flung no garland on the

bier of her, whose living brow he had wreathed with the brightest flowers of song. This is adduced by Serassi as a proof that he had never loved her. Ginguené himself can only account for it, by the presumption that he was piqued by that coldness and neglect, which I have shown was merely supposititious. Strange reasoning! as if Tasso, while his heart bled over his loss, in his solitary cell, could have deigned to join this crowd of courtly mourners! as if, under such circumstances, in such a moment, the greatness of his grief could have burst forth in any terms that must not have exposed himself to fresh rigors, and the fame, at least the discretion, of her he had loved, to suspicion! No! nothing remained to him but silence;—and he was silent.

CHAPTER XIX.

MILTON AND LEONORA BARONI.

The Marquis Manso of Naples, who in his early youth had entertained Tasso in his palace, had cherished and honored him when that great but unhappy man was wandering, brain-struck with misery, from one court to another,—was, in his old age, the host and admirer of Milton; thus, by a singular good fortune, allying his name to two of

the most illustrious of earth's diviner sons: while theirs, linked together by the recollection of this common friend, follow each other in our memory by a natural transition. We can think of them as pressing, though at an interval of many years, the same friendly hand, and gracing the same hospitable board with "colloquy sublime." Tasso, from the romance of his story, and his personal character, is the most interesting of the two; yet Milton, besides standing highest in the scale of moral dignity, sits nearest to our hearts as an Englishman, whose genius, speaking through our native accents, strikes upon our sense,

Like the large utterance of the early gods.

* * * * *

We rise from reading Johnson's Biography of Milton, either with the most painful and indignant feeling of the malignity of the critic,* or with an impression of Milton's character, as false as it is odious. Of moral inconsistency and weakness, blended with splendid genius, we have proofs lamentable and numerous enough: to be obliged to regard the mighty father of English verse,—him "who rode sublime upon the seraph wings of ecstasy,"—him, whose harmonious soul was tuned to the music of the spheres, though when struck in evil times, and by an adverse hand, it sent forth a crash of discord,—him, who has left us the most

* What Dr. Johnson *wrote* is known;—he was accustomed to *say* that the admiration expressed for Milton was all *cant*.

exquisite pictures of tenderness and beauty—to think of such a being as a petty domestic tyrant, a coarse-minded fanatic, stern and unfeeling in all the relations of life, were enough to confound all our ideas of moral fitness. When we figure to ourselves the author of Rasselas trampling over the ashes of Milton, lending his mighty powers to degrade the majestic, to disfigure the beautiful, and darken the glorious, it is with the same feeling of concentrated disgust with which we recall the violation of the poet's grave, some years ago, when vulgar savages defaced and carried off his sacred and venerable remains piecemeal.* Let us for a moment imagine our Milton descending to earth to assert his injured fame, and confronted with his great biographer—

Look here upon this picture, and on this—

The one, like his own Adam, with fair large front and hyacinthine locks, serene and blooming as his own Eden; in all the dignified graces which temperance and self-conquest lend to youth,† in all the purity of his stainless mind, radiant like another

* I have before me the pamphlet, entitled "A Narrative of the disinterment of Milton's coffin, on Wednesday the 4th of August, 1790, and of the treatment of the Corpse during that and the following day." The circumstances are too revolting to be dwelt upon.

† Si les Anges, (said Madame de Staël,) n'ont pas été representés sous les traits de femme, c'est parceque l'union de la force avec la pureté, est plus belle et plus céleste encore que la modestie même la plus parfaite dans un être faible.

Moses, with the reflected glories of the Empyreum, —and then look upon the other!—But it is an awful thing for little people, to meddle with great and sacred names; and so leaving the Hippopotamus of literature in his den—proceed we.

It relieves the heart from an oppressive contradiction to behold Milton, such as he was represented by his other biographers, and such as undoubtedly he really was. It is well known, that in his youth, and even at a late age, he had an uncommonly fine person, almost to effeminacy; and was as gracefully endowed in form and manners, as he was highly and holily gifted in mind. His natural mildness, cheerfulness, and courtesy, are commemorated by all who knew him, or lived near his time.* He whom Johnson accuses of a "Turkish contempt of females, as inferior beings," and whom he represents in a light so ungentle and gloomy, that we cannot imagine him under the influence of beauty, was early touched by the softest passions, and during his whole life peculiarly sensible to the charm of female society: witness his successive marriages, and his friendship and intercourse with Lady Margaret Ley, and the all-accomplished Countess of Ranelagh, who supplied

* See his life by Dr. Symmons, Dr. Todd, Newton, Hayley, Aubrey Richardson, Warton.

"She (his daughter Deborah) spoke of him with great tenderness; she said he was delightful company, the life of the conversation, and that on account of a flow of subject, and an unaffected cheerfulness and civility," &c.—RICHARDSON.

to him, as he says, the place of every friend;* witness, too, a thousand most lovely and glorious passages scattered through his works, which women may quote with triumph, as proofs that we had no small influence over the imagination of our great epic poet. What but the most reverential and lofty feeling of the graces and virtues proper to our sex, could have embodied such an exquisite vision as the Lady in Comus? or created his delightful Eve? on whom, "as on a queen, a pomp of winning graces waited still."

> All higher knowledge in her presence falls
> Degraded; wisdom, in discourse with her,
> Loses discountenanc'd, and like folly shows;
> Authority and reason on her wait,
> As one intended first, not after made
> Occasionally; and to consummate all,
> Greatness of mind and nobleness their seat,
> Built in her loveliest, and create an awe
> About her, as a guard angelic plac'd.

And this is the being whom a lady-author calls a "great overgrown baby, with nothing to recommend her but her submission, and her fine hair!"†—two things, be it observed, among the most graceful of our feminine attributes, mental and exterior. The poet who conceived and wrote this description, most assuredly had not a "Turkish contempt" for the female character.

* She was Catherine Boyle, the daughter of the Great Earl of Cork, one of the most excellent and most distinguished women of that time.—*See Hayley's Life of Milton.*

† Miss Letitia Hawkins.

Milton was in love, as he tells us himself, at nineteen; but the object cannot even be guessed at. He has celebrated this boyish passion very beautifully in one of his Latin elegies. One of the passages in this poem, in which he compares the effect produced on him by the first momentary view of his mistress, followed by her immediate absence to the Theban Œclides,* swallowed up by the abyss which opens beneath him, and gazing back upon the parting light of day, is admired for its classic sublimity and appropriate beauty.

There is a tradition mentioned by all his biographers, that while Milton was a student at Cambridge, an Italian lady of rank, who was travelling in England, found him sleeping one day under the shade of a tree, and, struck with his beauty, wrote with her pencil on a slip of paper, the pretty madrigal, of Guarini, which Menage translated for Madame de Sévigné, "Occhi, stelle mortali," and leaving it in his hand, pursued her journey. This fair unknown is said to have been the cause of Milton's travels into Italy; but the story rests on no authority: and it is clear, that the "foreign fair" to whom the Sonnets are addressed, was neither imaginary nor unknown. During his stay at Rome, he was received with particular distinction by the Cardinal Barberini, the nephew of the reigning Pope, and at his palace had frequent opportunities of hearing Leonora Baroni, the finest singer in Italy. She was the daughter of

* Otherwise Amphiaraus: his story is told by Ovid. Met. B. 9.

Adriana of Mantua, surnamed, for her beauty, La Bella Adriana, and the best singer and player on the lute of her time. Leonora inherited her mother's extraordinary talent for music, and conquered all hearts by the inexpressible charm of her voice and style. She was also a poetess, frequently composing the words of her own songs. Though not a regular beauty, she had brilliant eyes, and a captivating countenance and manner. Count Fulvio Testi, in a Sonnet addressed to her, celebrates the union of so many charms:

> Tra il concento e 'l fulgor, dubbio è se sia
> udir più dolce, o il rimirar più caro.
> Deh fammi cieco, o fammi sordo, amore!

M. Maugars, himself a musician, who saw and heard Leonora at Rome, praises her talents generally, and adds, that she was no coquette; that she sang with confidence, but with modesty; that there was nothing in her manners that could be censured; that the effect she produced on those who heard her, was owing, not only to the wonderful rapidity and delicacy of her execution, but to the care with which she gave the exact sense and proper expression of the words she sang. He tells us, that on one occasion, she *favored* him by singing with her mother and her sister, each accompanying herself on a different instrument, (in those days pianos were not, and Leonora's favorite instrument was the Theorbo, on which she excelled.) This little concert so enraptured our musician, that, to

use his own words, he forgot his mortality, "et crut être dejà parmi les anges, jouissant des contentemens des bienheureux."

It is no wonder that the charms and talents which exalted this prosaic Frenchman almost into a poet, should turn the heads of poets themselves. The verses addressed to Leonora were collected into a volume, and published under the title of "Applausi poetici alle glorie della Signora Leonora Baroni."—"Poetical eulogies to the glory of Signora Leonora Baroni." A similar homage had been paid to her mother, Adriana, who reckoned Tasso among her panegyrists. This may seem too high a distinction for a species of talent, which, however admirable, can leave behind no durable monument, and therefore can claim no interest with posterity. Yet is it just, that those whom Heaven has enriched with the gift of melody, and who have cultivated that delicious faculty to its height, until with angel-skill they can suspend the dominion of pain in aching hearts,*—that such should ravish with delight a whole generation, and then perish from the earth, they and their memory, with the pleasure they bestowed, and gratitude be voiceless and tuneless in their praise? The gift of song is fleeting as that of beauty; but while the painter fixes on his canvas

* As Milton felt when he wrote—

> And ever against eating cares,
> Lap me in soft Lydian airs.

The vermeil-tinctur'd lip,
Love-darting eyes, and tresses like the morn,

what shall immortalize the tones which "turned sense to soul?" what but poetry, which, while it preserves the memory of such excellence, gives back to the fancy some reflection of the delight we have felt, when the full tide of a divine voice is poured forth to the sense, like wine from an enchanted cup, making us thrill "with music's pulse in every artery." Leonora Baroni had her poets, and her name, linked with that of Milton, shall never die.

It is a curious circumstance, and one but little consonant with the popular idea of Milton's austerity, that the object of his poetical homage, and even of his serious admiration, was an Italian singer; but it must be remembered, that Milton, the son of an accomplished musician,* was, by nature and education, peculiarly susceptible to the power of sweet sounds. Next to poetry, music was with him a passion; and the profession of a singer in those days, when the art was in its second

* Milton alludes to his father's talent for music:

Thyself
Art skilful to associate verse with airs
Harmonious, and to give the human voice
A thousand modulations.—
Such distribution of himself to us
Was Phœbus' choice; *thou* hast thy gift, and I
Mine also; and between us we receive,
Father and Son, the whole inspiring God!
AD PATREM

infancy, was more highly estimated, in proportion as excellence was more rare and less publicly exhibited. I cannot find that either Leonora Baroni, or her mother Adriana, ever appeared on a stage; yet their celebrity had spread from one end of Italy to the other. Milton joined the crowd of Leonora's votaries at Rome, and has expressed his enthusiastic admiration, not only in verse but in prose.* He addressed her in Latin and Italian, the languages she understood, and which she had perfectly at command. In one of his Latin poems, "To Leonora, singing at Rome," the allusion to Leonora d'Este,

> Another Leonora once inspired
> Tasso, by hopeless love to frenzy fired, &c.

is as happy as it is beautiful, and shows the belief which then prevailed of the real cause of Tasso's delirium.

Two of Milton's Italian sonnets are very beautiful, and have been translated by Cowper with singular felicity. All his biographers agree that Leonora Baroni is the subject of both; the first, addressed to Carlo Diodati, describes the lady, whose dark and foreign charms are opposed to those of the *blonde* beauties he had admired in his youth.

* There is extant a prose letter from Milton to Holstentius, the librarian of the Vatican, in which he accounts as one of his greatest pleasures at Rome, that of having known and heard Leonora.

SONNET.

Diodati! e te 'l diro con maraviglia, &c.

Charles,—and I say it wondering,—thou must know
That I, who once assumed a scornful air,
And scoffed at Love, am fallen into his snare;
(Full many an upright man has fallen so.)
Yet think me not thus dazzled by the flow
Of golden locks, or damask rose; more rare
The heartfelt beauties of my foreign fair!
A mien majestic, with dark brows, that show
The tranquil lustre of a lofty mind,—
Words exquisite, of idioms more than one;
And song, whose fascinating power might bind,
And from her sphere draw down the lab'ring moon;
With such fire-darting eyes, that should I fill
Mine ears with wax, she would enchant me still!

In this translation, though elegant and faithful, the lines,

A mien majestic, with dark brows, that show
The tranquil lustre of a lofty mind,

have much diluted the energy of Milton's

Portamenti alti onesti, e nelle ciglia
Quel sereno fulgor d'amabil nero.

In the other sonnet, addressed to Leonora, he gives, with all the simplicity of conscious worth, this lofty description of himself, and of his claims to her preference.

SONNET.

Giovane, piano, e semplicetto amante, &c.

Enamor'd, artless, young, on foreign ground,
Uncertain whether from myself to fly,

To thee, dear lady, with an humble sigh,
Let me devote my heart, which I have found,
By certain proofs not few, intrepid, sound,
Good, and addicted to conceptions high:
When tempests shake the world, and fire the sky
It rests in adamant, self-wrapt around,
As safe from envy and from outrage rude,
From hopes and fears that vulgar minds abuse,
As fond of genius and fixed solitude,
Of the resounding lyre and every muse.
Weak you will find it in one only part,
Now pierc'd by Love's immedicable dart.

* * * * *

Milton was three times married. The relations of his first wife, (Mary Powell,) who were violent Royalists, and ashamed or afraid of their connection with a republican, persuaded her to leave him. She absolutely forsook her husband for nearly three years, and resided with her family at Oxford, when that city was the head-quarters of the King's party. "I have so much charity for her," says Aubrey, "that she might not wrong his bed; but what man (especially contemplative,) would like to have a young wife environed and stormed by the sons of Mars, and those of the ennemie partie?"

Milton, though a suspicion of the nature hinted at by Aubrey never rose in his mind, was justly incensed at this dereliction. He was on the point of divorcing this contumacious bride, and had already made choice of another* to succeed her,

* Miss Davies. "The father (says Hayley) seems to have been a convert to Milton's arguments; but the lady had scruples

when she threw herself, impromptu, at his feet and implored his forgiveness. He forgave her: and when the republican party triumphed, the family who had so cruelly wronged him found a refuge in his house. This woman embittered his life for fourteen or fifteen years.

A remembrance of the reconciliation with his wife, and of his own feelings on that occasion, are said to have suggested to Milton's mind the beautiful scene between Adam and Eve, in the tenth book of the Paradise Lost.

> She ended weeping? and her lowly plight,
> Immovable, till peace obtained for faults
> Acknowledged and deplored, in Adam wrought
> Commiseration; soon his heart relented
> Tow'rds her, his life so late and sole delight
> Now at his feet submissive in distress,
> Creature so fair, his reconcilement seeking;
> As one disarmed, his anger all he lost, &c.

Milton's second and most beloved wife (Catherine Woodcock) died in childbed, within a year after their marriage. He honored her memory with what Johnson (out upon him!) calls a *poor* sonnet; it is the one beginning

She possessed (according to Phillips) both wit and beauty. A novelist could hardly imagine circumstances more singularly distressing to sensibility than the situation of the poet, if, as we may reasonably conjecture, he was deeply enamored of this lady; if her father was inclined to accept him as a son-in-law, and the object of his love had no inclination to reject his suit, but what arose from a dread of his being indissolubly united to another." *Life of Milton*, p. 90.

> Methought I saw my late espoused saint
> Brought to me, like Alcestis from the grave;

which, in its solemn and tender strain of feeling and modulated harmony, reminds us of Dante. He never ceased to lament her, and to cherish her memory with a fond regret:—she must have been full in his heart and mind when he wrote those touching lines in the Paradise Lost—

> How can I live without thee? how forego
> Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined,
> To live again in these wild woods forlorn?
> Should God create another Eve, and I
> Another rib afford, yet loss of thee
> Would never from my heart!

After her death,—blind, disconsolate, and helpless—he was abandoned to petty wrongs and domestic discord; and suffered from the disobedience and unkindness of his two elder daughters, like another Lear. His youngest daughter, Deborah, was the only one who acted as his amanuensis, and she always spoke of him with extreme affection;—on being suddenly shown his picture, twenty years after his death, she burst into tears.

These three daughters were grown up, and the youngest about fifteen, when Milton married his third wife, Elizabeth Minshull. She was a gentle, kind-hearted woman, without pretensions of any kind, who watched over his declining years with affectionate care. One biographer has not scrupled to assert, that to her,—or rather to her tender

reverence for his studious habits, and to the peace and comfort she brought to his heart and home,—we owe the Paradise Lost: if true, what a debt immense of endless gratitude is due to the memory of this unobtrusive and amiable woman!

CHAPTER XX.

CAREW'S CELIA.—LUCY SACHEVEREL.

From the reign of Charles the First may be dated that revolution in the spirit and form of our lyric poetry, which led to its subsequent degradation. The first Italian school of poetry, to which we owed our Surreys, our Spensers, and our Milton's, had now declined. The high contemplative tone of passion, the magnanimous and chivalrous homage paid to women, gradually gave way before the French taste and French gallantry, introduced, or at least encouraged and rendered fashionable, by Henrietta Maria and her gay household. The muse of amatory poetry (I presume there *is* such a Muse, though I know not to which of the Nine the title properly applies) no longer walked the earth star-crowned and vestal-robed, "col dir pien d' intelletti, dolci ed alti,"—"with love upon her lips, and looks commercing with the skies;"—she suited

her garb to the fashion of the times, and tripped along in guise of an Arcadian princess, half regal, half pastoral, trailing a sheep-hook crowned with flowers, and sparkling with foreign ornaments,

Pale glistening pearls and rainbow-colored gems.

Then in the "brisk and giddy-paced times" of Charles the Second, she flaunted an airy coquette, or an unblushing courtesan, ("unveiled her eyes, —unclasped her zone;") and when these sinful doings were banished, she took the hue of the new morals—new fashions—new manners,—and we find her a court prude, swimming in a hoop and red-heeled shoes, "conscious of the rich brocade," and ogling behind her fan: or else in the opposite extreme, like a *bergère* in a French ballet, stuck over with sentimental common-places and artificial flowers.

This, in general terms, was the progress of the lyric muse, from the poets of Queen Elizabeth's days down to the wits of Queen Anne's. Of course, there are modifications and exceptions, which will suggest themselves to the poetical reader; but it does not enter into the plan of this sketch to treat matters thus critically and profoundly. To return then to the days of Charles the First.

It must be confessed that the union of Italian sentiment and imagination with French vivacity and gallantry, was, in the commencement, exceedingly graceful, before all poetry was lost in wit, and gallantry sunk into licentiousness.

Carew, one of the first who distinguished himself in this style, has been most unaccountably eclipsed by the reputation of Waller, and deserved better than to have had his name hitched into line between Sprat and Sedley;

Sprat, Carew, Sedley, and a hundred more.*

As an amatory poet, he is far superior to Waller; he had equal smoothness and fancy, and much more variety, tenderness, and earnestness; if his love was less ambitiously, and even less honorably placed, it was, at least, more deep seated, and far more fervent. The real name of the lady he has celebrated under the poetical appellation of Celia, is not known—it is only certain that she was no "fabled fair,"—and that his love was repaid with falsehood.

Hard fate! to have been once possessed
A victor of a heart,
Achieved with labor and unrest,
And then forced to depart!

From the irregular habits of Carew, it is possible he might have set the example of inconstancy and yet this is but a poor excuse for *her*.

Carew spent his life in the Court of Charles the First, who admired and loved him for his wit and amiable manners, though he reproved his *libertinage*. In the midst of that dissipation, which has polluted some of his poems, he was full of high

* Pope.

poetic feeling, and a truly generous lover: for even while he woos his fair one in the most soul-moving terms of flowery adulation and tender entreaty, he puts her on her guard against his own arts, and thus sweetly pleads against himself;

> Rather let the lover pine,
> Than his pale cheek should assign
> A perpetual blush to thine!

And his admiration of female chastity is elsewhere frequently, as well as forcibly expressed.—With all his elegance and tenderness, Carew is never feeble; and in his laments there is nothing whining or unmanly. After lavishing at the feet of his mistress the most passionate devotion, and the most exquisite flattery, hear him rebuke her pride with all the spirit of an offended poet!

> Know, Celia! since thou art so proud,
> 'Twas I that gave thee thy renown;
> Thou hadst in the forgotten crowd
> Of common beauties, lived unknown,
> Had not my verse exhaled thy name,
> And with it impt the wings of fame.
>
> That killing power is none of thine,
> I gave it to thy voice and eyes,
> Thy sweets, thy graces, all are mine.
> Thou art my star—shin'st in my skies;
> Then dart not from thy borrowed sphere
> Light'ning on him, who fixed thee there.

The identity of his Celia is now lost in a name,—and she deserves it: perhaps had she appre-

ciated the love she inspired, and been true to that she professed, she might have won her elegant lover back to virtue, and wreathed her fame with his forever. Disappointed in the object of his idolatry, Carew plunged madly into pleasure, and thus hastened his end. He died, as Clarendon tells us, with "deep remorse for his past excesses, and every manifestation of Christianity his best friends could desire."

Besides his Celia, Carew has celebrated several other ladies of the Court, and particularly Lady Mary Villars; the Countess of Anglesea; Lady Carlisle, the theme of all the poets of her age, and her lovely daughter, Lady Anne Hay, on whom he wrote an elegy, which begins with some lines never surpassed in harmony and tenderness.

I heard the virgin's sigh! I saw the sleek
And polish'd courtier channel his fresh cheek
With real tears; the new betrothed maid
Smil'd not that day; the graver senate laid
Their business by; of all the courtly throng
Grief seal'd the heart, and silence bound the tongue!
* * * * *
We will not bathe thy corpse with a forc'd tear,
Nor shall thy train borrow the blacks they wear;
Such vulgar spice and gums embalm not thee,
That art the theme of Truth, not Poetry.

Here Carew has fallen into the vulgar error, that *poetry* and *fiction* are synonymous.

Lady Anne Wentworth,* daughter of the first

* The only daughter of this Lady Anne Wentworth, married Sir W. Noel, and was the ancestress of Lady Byron, the widow of the poet.

Earl of Cleveland, who, after making terrible havoc in the heart of the Lord Chief Justice Finch, married Lord Lovelace, is another of Carew's fair heroines. For her marriage he wrote the epithalamium,

Break not the slumbers of the bride, &c.

As Carew is not a *popular* poet, nor often found in a lady's library, I add a few extracts of peculiar beauty.

TO CELIA.

Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose;
For in your beauties' orient deep
Those flowers as in their causes sleep.

Ask me no more, whither do stray
The golden atoms of the day;
For in pure love, Heaven did prepare
Those powders to enrich your hair.

Ask me no more, whither doth haste
The nightingale, when May is past;
For in your sweet dividing throat
She winters, and keeps warm her note.

Ask me no more, where those stars light
That downwards fall in dead of night;
For in your eyes they sit—and there
Fix'd become as in their sphere.

Ask me no more, if east or west,
The phœnix builds her spicy nest;

For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies.

Ladies, fly from Love's smooth tale,
Oaths steep'd in tears do oft prevail;
Grief is infectious, and the air,
Inflam'd with sighs, will blast the fair;
Then stop your ears when lovers cry,
Lest yourself weep, when no soft eye
Shall with a sorrowing tear repay
The pity which you cast away.

And when thou breath'st, the winds are ready straight
To filch it from thee; and do therefore wait
Close at thy lips, and snatching it from thence,
Bear it to heaven, where 'tis Jove's frankincense.
Fair goddess, since thy feature makes thee one,
Yet be not such for these respects alone;
But as you are divine in outward view,
So be within as fair, as good, as true.

Hark! how the bashful morn in vain
Courts the amorous marigold
With sighing blasts and weeping vain;
Yet she refuses to unfold.
But when the planet of the day
Approacheth with his powerful ray,
Then she spreads, then she receives,
His warmer beams into her virgin leaves.

So shalt thou thrive in love, fond boy;
If thy tears and sighs discover
Thy grief, thou never shalt enjoy
The just reward of a bold lover:

But when with moving accents thou
Shall constant faith and service vow,
Thy Celia shall receive those charms
With open ears, and with unfolded arms.
* * * * *

The gallant and accomplished Colonel Lovelace was, I believe, a relation of the Lord Lovelace who married Lady Anne Wentworth, and the friend and contemporary of Carew. His fate and history would form the groundwork of a romance; and in his person and character he was formed to be the hero of one. He was as fearlessly brave as a knight-errant; so handsome in person, that he could not appear without inspiring admiration; a polished courtier; an elegant scholar; and to crown all, a lover and a poet. He wrote a volume of poems, dedicated to the praises of Lucy Sacheverel, with whom he had exchanged vows of everlasting love. Her poetical appellation, according to the affected taste of the day, was *Lucasta*. When the civil wars broke out, Lovelace devoted his life and fortunes to the service of the King; and on joining the army, he wrote that beautiful song to his mistress, which has been so often quoted,—

Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;

And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, dear! so much,
Lov'd I not honor more.

The rest of his life was a series of the most cruel misfortunes. He was imprisoned on account of his enthusiastic and chivalrous loyalty; but no dungeon could subdue his buoyant spirit. His song "to Althea from Prison," is full of grace and animation, and breathes the very soul of love and honor.

When Love, with unconfined wings,
Hovers within my gates,
And my divine Althea brings
To whisper at the grates;

When I lie tangled in her hair,
And fettered to her eye,
The birds that wanton in the air,
Know no such liberty.

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage.

If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,—
Angels alone that soar above
Enjoy such liberty.

Lovelace afterwards commanded a regiment at

the siege of Dunkirk, where he was severely, and, as it was supposed, mortally wounded. False tidings of his death were brought to England; and when he returned, he found his Lucy ("O most wicked haste!") married to another; it was a blow he never recovered. He had spent nearly his whole patrimony in the King's service, and now became utterly reckless. After wandering about London in obscurity and penury, dissipating his scanty resources in riot with his brother cavaliers, and in drinking the health of the exiled King and confusion to Cromwell, this idol of women and envy of men,—the beautiful, brave, high-born, and accomplished Lovelace, died miserably in a little lodging in Shoe Lane. He was only in his thirty-ninth year.

The mother of Lucy Sacheverel was Lucy, daughter of Sir Henry Hastings, ancestor to the present Marquis of Hastings. How could she so belie her noble blood? I would excuse her were it possible, for she must have been a fine creature to have inspired and appreciated such a sentiment as that contained in the first song: but acts cry aloud against her. Her plighted hand was not transferred to another, when time had sanctified and mellowed regret; but with a cruel and unfeminine precipitancy. Since then her lover has bequeathed her name to immortality, he is sufficiently avenged. Let her stand forth condemned and scorned forever, as faithless, heartless—light as air, false as water, and rash as fire.—I abjure her.

CHAPTER XXI.

WALLER'S SACHARISSA.

The courtly Waller, like the lady in the Maids' Tragedy, loved with his ambition,—not with his eyes; still less with his heart. A critic, in designating the poets of that time, says truly that "Waller still lives in Sacharissa:" he lives in her name more than she does in his poetry; he gave that name a charm and a celebrity which has survived the admiration his verses inspired, and which has assisted to preserve them and himself from oblivion. If Sacharissa had not been a real and an interesting object, Waller's poetical praises had died with her, and she with them. He wants earnestness; his lines were not inspired by love, and they give "no echo to the seat where love is throned." Instead of passion and poetry, we have gallantry and flattery; gallantry, which was beneath the dignity of its object; and flattery, which was yet more superfluous,—it was painting the lily and throwing perfume on the violet.

Waller's Sacharissa was the Lady Dorothea Sydney, the eldest daughter of the Earl of Leicester, and born in 1620. At the time he thought fit to make her the object of his homage she was about eighteen, beautiful, accomplished, and admired. Waller was handsome, rich, a wit, and five

and twenty. He had ever an excellent opinion of himself, and a prudent care of his worldly interests. He was a great poet, in days when Spenser was forgotten, Milton neglected, and Pope unborn. He began by addressing to her the lines on her picture.

> Such was Philoclea and such Dorus' flame,*

Then we have the poems written at Penshurst,—in this strain,—

> Ye lofty beeches! tell this matchless dame,
> That if together ye fed all one flame,
> It could not equalize the hundredth part
> Of what her eyes have kindled in my heart, &c.

The lady was content to be the theme of a fashionable poet: but when he presumed farther, she crushed all hopes with the most undisguised aversion and disdain: thereupon he rails,—thus,—

> To thee a wild and cruel soul is given,
> More deaf than trees, and prouder than the heaven;
> Love's foe profest! why dost thou falsely feign
> Thyself a Sydney? From which noble strain
> He sprung that could so far exalt the name
> Of love, and warm a nation with his flame.†

His mortified vanity turned for consolation to Amoret, (Lady Sophia Murray,) the intimate companion of Sacharissa. He describes the friendship between these two beautiful girls very gracefully.

* Alluding to the two heroines of Sir Philip Sydney's Arcadia; Sacharissa was the grandniece of that *preux chevalier*, and hence the frequent allusions to his name and fame.

† Alluding to his Philip Sydney.

Tell me, lovely, loving pair!
Why so kind, and so severe?
Why so careless of our care
Only to yourselves so dear?
* * *
Not the silver doves that fly
Yoked to Cytherea's car;
Not the wings that lift so high,
And convey her son so far,

Are so lovely, sweet and fair,
Or do more ennoble love,
Are so choicely matched a pair,
Or with more consent do move.

And they are very beautifully contrasted in the lines to Amoret—

If sweet Amoret complains,
I have sense of all her pains;
But for Sacharissa, I
Do not only grieve, but die!
* * *
'Tis amazement more than love,
Which her radiant eyes do move;
If less splendor wait on thine,
Yet they so benignly shine,
I would turn my dazzled sight
To behold their milder light.
* * *
Amoret! as sweet and good
As the most delicious food,
Which but tasted does impart
Life and gladness to the heart.
Sacharissa's beauty's wine,
Which to madness doth incline,

Such a liquor as no brain
That is mortal, can sustain.

But Lady Sophia, though of a softer disposition, and not carrying in her mild eyes the scornful and destructive light which sparkled in those of Sacharissa, was not to be "be-rhymed" into love any more than her fair friend. She applauded, but she repelled: she smiled, but she was cold. Waller consoled himself by marrying a city widow, worth thirty thousand pounds.

The truth is, that with all his wit and his elegance of fancy, of which there are some inimitable examples,—as the application of the story of Daphne, and of the fable of the wounded eagle; the lines on Sacharissa's girdle; the graceful little song, "Go, lovely Rose," to which I need only allude, and many others,—Waller has failed in convincing us of his sincerity. As Rosalind says, "Cupid might have clapped him on the shoulder, but we could warrant him heart whole." All along our sympathy is rather with the proud beauty, than with the irritable self-complacent poet. Sacharissa might have been proud, but she was not arrogant; her manners were gentle and retiring; and her disposition rather led her to shun than to seek publicity and admiration.

Such cheerful modesty, such humble state,
Moves certain love, but with as doubtful fate;
As when beyond our greedy reach, we see
Inviting fruit on too sublime a tree.*

* Lines on her picture.

The address to Sacharissa's *femme-de-chambre*, beginning, "Fair fellow-servant," is not to be compared with Tasso's ode to the Countess of Scandiano's maid, but contains some most elegant lines.

> You the soft season know, when best her mind
> May be to pity, or to love inclined:
> In some well-chosen hour supply his fear,
> Whose hopeless love durst never tempt the ear
> Of that stern goddess; you, her priest, declare
> What offerings may propitiate the fair:
> Rich orient pearl, bright stones that ne'er decay,
> Or polished lines, that longer last than they.
> * * * * *
> But since her eyes, her teeth, her lip excels
> All that is found in mines or fishes' shells,
> Her nobler part as far exceeding these,
> None but immortal gifts her mind should please.

These lines impress us with the image of a very imperious and disdainful beauty; yet such was not the character of Sacharissa's person or mind.* Nor is it necessary to imagine her such, to account for her rejection of Waller, and her indifference to his flattery. There was a meanness about the man: he wanted not birth alone, but all the high and generous qualities which must have been required to recommend him to a woman, who, with the blood and the pride of the Sydneys, inherited their large heart and noble spirit. We are not surprised when she turned from the poet to give her hand to Henry

* Sacharissa, the poetical name Waller himself gave her, signifies *sweetness*.

Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, one of the most interesting and heroic characters of that time. He was then only nineteen, and she was about the same age. This marriage was celebrated with great splendor at Penshurst, July 30, 1639.

Waller, who had professed that his hope

> Should ne'er rise higher
> Than for a pardon that he dared admire,

pressed forward with his congratulations in verse and prose, and wrote the following letter, full of pleasant imprecations, to Lady Lucy Sydney, the younger sister of Sacharissa. It will be allowed that it argues more wit and good-nature than love or sorrow; and that he was resolved that the willow should sit as gracefully and lightly on his brow, as the myrtle or the bays.

"To my Lady Lucy Sydney, on the marriage of my Lady Dorothea, her sister."

"MADAM,—In this common joy, at Penshurst, I know none to whom complaints may come less unseasonable than to your Ladyship,—the loss of a bedfellow being almost equal to that of a mistress; and therefore you ought, at least, to pardon, if you consent not to the imprecations of the deserted, which just Heaven, no doubt, will hear.

"May my Lady Dorothea, if we may yet call her so, suffer as much, and have the like passion, for this young Lord, whom she has preferred to the rest of mankind, as others have had for her; and

may this love, before the year come about, make her taste of the first curse imposed on womankind —the pains of becoming a mother. May her first-born be none of her own sex, nor so like her, but that he may resemble her Lord as much as herself

"May she, that always affected silence and retiredness, have the house filled with the noise and number of her children, and hereafter of her grandchildren, and then may she arrive at that great curse, so much declined by fair ladies,—*old age*. May she live to be very old, and yet seem young—be told so by her glass—and have no aches to inform her of the truth: and when she shall appear to be mortal, may her Lord not mourn for her, but go hand-in-hand with her to that place, where, we are told, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, that, being there divorced, we may all have an equal interest in her again. My revenge being immortal, I wish that all this may also befall their posterity to the world's end and afterwards.

"To you, Madam, I wish all good things, and that this loss may, in good time, be happily supplied with a more constant bed-fellow of the other sex.

"Madam, I humbly kiss your hands, and beg pardon for this trouble from your Ladyship's most humble servant, E. WALLER."

Lady Sunderland had been married about three years: she and her youthful husband lived in the tenderest union, and she was already the happy

mother of two fair infants, a son and a daughter,—when the civil wars broke out, and Lord Sunderland followed the King to the field. In the Sydney papers are some beautiful letters to his wife, written from the camp before Oxford. The last of these, which is in a strain of playful and affectionate gayety, thus concludes,—"Pray bless Poppet for me! * and tell her I would have wrote to her, but that, upon mature deliberation, I found it uncivil to return an answer to a lady in another character than her own, which I am not yet learned enough to do.—I beseech you to present his service to my Lady,† who is most passionately and perfectly yours, &c. SUNDERLAND."

Three days afterwards this tender and gallant heart had ceased to beat; he was killed in the battle of Newbury, at the age of three-and-twenty. His unhappy wife, on hearing the news of his death, was prematurely taken ill, and delivered of an infant, which died almost immediately after its birth. She recovered, however, from a dangerous and protracted illness, through the affectionate and unceasing attentions of her mother, Lady Leicester, who never quitted her for several months. Her father wrote her a letter of condolence, which would serve as a model for all letters

* His infant daughter, then about two years old, afterwards Marchioness of Halifax.

† The Countess's mother, Lady Leicester, who was then with her at Althorpe.

on similar occasions. "I know," he says, "that it is to no purpose to advise you not to grieve; that is not my intention; for such a loss as yours, cannot be received indifferently by a nature so tender and sensible as yours," &c. After touching lightly and delicately on the obvious sources of consolation, he reminds her, that her duty to the dead requires her to be careful of herself, and not hazard her very existence by the indulgence of grief. "You offend him you loved, if you hurt that person whom he loved; remember how apprehensive he was of your danger, how grieved for any thing that troubled you! I know you lived happily together, so as nobody but yourself could measure the contentment of it. I rejoiced at it, and did thank God for making me one of the means to procure it for you," &c.*

Those who have known deep sorrow, and felt what it is to shrink with shattered nerves and a wounded spirit from the busy hand of consolation, fretting where it cannot heal, will appreciate such a letter as this.

Lady Sunderland, on her recovery, retired from the world, and centering all her affections in her children, seemed to live only for them. She resided, after her widowhood, at Althorpe, where she occupied herself with improving the house and gardens. The fine hall and staircase of that noble seat, which are deservedly admired for their archi-

* Sydney's Memorials, vol. ii. p. 271.

tectural beauty, were planned and erected by her After the lapse of about thirteen years, her father, Lord Leicester, prevailed on her to choose one from among the numerous suitors who sought her hand; he dreaded, lest on his death, she should be left unprotected, with her infant children, in those evil times; and she married, in obedience to his wish, Sir Robert Smythe, of Sutton, who was her second cousin, and had long been attached to her. She lived to see her eldest son, the second Earl of Sunderland, a man of transcendant talents, but versatile principles, at the head of the government, and had the happiness to close her eyes before he had abused his admirable abilities, to the vilest purposes of party and court intrigue. The Earl was appointed principal Secretary of State in 1682; his mother died in 1683.

There is a fine portrait of Sacharissa at Blenheim, of which there are many engravings. It must have been painted by Vandyke, shortly after her marriage, and before the death of her husband. If the withered branch, to which she is pointing, be supposed to allude to her widowhood, it must have been added afterwards, as Vandyke died in 1641, and Lord Sunderland in 1643. In the gallery at Althorpe, there are three pictures of this celebrated woman. One represents her in a hat, and at the age of fifteen or sixteen, gay, girlish, and blooming; the second far more interesting, was painted about the time of her first marriage; it is exceedingly sweet and lady-like. The features

are delicate, with redundant light brown hair, and eyes and eye-brows of a darker hue; the bust and hands very exquisite; on the whole, however, the high breeding of the face and hair is more conspicuous than the beauty of the person. These two portraits are by Vandyke; nor ought I to forget to mention that the painter himself was supposed to have indulged a respectful but ardent passion for Lady Sunderland, and to have painted her portrait literally *con amour*.*

A third picture represents her about the time of her second marriage; the expression wholly changed —cold, faded, sad, but still sweet-looking and delicate. One might fancy her contemplating with a sick heart, the portrait of Lord Sunderland, the lover and husband of her early youth, and that of her unfortunate but celebrated brother, Algernon Sydney; both which hang on the opposite side of the gallery.

The present Duke of Marlborough, and the present Earl Spencer, are the lineal descendants of Waller's Sacharissa.

One little incident, somewhat prosaic indeed, proves how little heart there was in Waller's poetical attachment to this beautiful and admirable woman. When Lady Sunderland, after a retirement of thirty years, reappeared in the court she had once adorned, she met Waller at Lady Wharton's, and addressing him with a smiling courtesy, she reminded him of their youthful days:—"When,"

* See State Poems, vol. iii. p. 396.

said she, "will you write such fine verses on me again?"—"Madam," replied Waller, "when your Ladyship is young and handsome again." This was contemptible and coarse—the sentiment was not that of a well-bred or a feeling man, far less that of a lover or a poet,—no!

> Love is not love,
> That alters where it alteration finds.

One would think that the sight of a woman, whom he had last seen in the full bloom of youth and glow of happiness,—who had endured, since they parted, such extremity of affliction as far more than avenged his wounded vanity, might have awakened some tender thoughts and called forth a gentler reply. When some one expressed surprise to Petrarch, that Laura, no longer young, had still power to charm and inspire him, he answered, "Piaga per allentar d' arco non sana,"—"The wound is not healed though the bow be unbent." This was in a finer spirit.

Something in the same character, as his reply to Lady Sunderland, was Waller's famous repartee, when Charles the Second told him that his lines on Oliver Cromwell were better than those written on his royal self. "Please your Majesty, we poets succeed better in fiction than in truth." Nothing could be more admirably *apropos*, more witty, more courtier-like; it was only *false*, and in a poor time-serving spirit. It showed as much meanness of soul as presence of mind. What true poet, who felt as a poet, would have said this?

CHAPTER XXII.

BEAUTIES AND POETS.

NEARLY contemporary with Waller's Sacharissa lived several women of high rank, distinguished as munificent patronesses of poetry, and favorite themes of poets, for the time being. There was the Countess of Pembroke, celebrated by Ben Jonson,

> The subject of all verse,
> Sydney's sister, Pembroke's mother.

There was the famous Lucy Percy, Countess of Carlisle, very clever, and very fantastic, who aspired to be the Aspasia, the De Rambouillet of her day, and did not quite succeed. She was celebrated by almost all the contemporary poets, and even in French, by Voiture. There was Lucy Harrington, Countess of Bedford, who, notwithstanding the accusation of vanity and extravagance which has been brought against her, was an amiable woman, and munificently rewarded, in presents and pensions, the incense of the poets around her. I know not what her Ladyship may have paid for the following exquisite lines by Ben Jonson; but the reader will agree with me, that it could not have been *too* much.

ON LUCY, COUNTESS OF BEDFORD.

> This morning, timely rapt with holy fire,
> I thought to form unto my zealous muse

What kind of creature I could most desire
To honor, serve, and love; as poets use:
I meant to make her fair, and free, and wise,
Of greatest blood, and yet more good than great.
I meant the day-star should not brighter rise,
Nor lend like influence from his ancient seat.

I meant she should be courteous, facile, sweet,
Hating that solemn vice of greatness, *pride;*
I meant each softest virtue there should meet,
Fit in that softer bosom to reside.
Only a learned and a manly soul
I purpose'd her; that should, with even powers,
The rock, the spindle, and the shears control
Of destiny, and spin her own free hours.
Such when I meant to feign, and wished to see,
My muse bade Bedford write,—and that was she.

There was also the "beautiful and every way excellent" Lady Anne Rich,* the daughter-in-law of her who was so loved by Sir Philip Sydney; and the memorable and magnificent—but somewhat masculine—Anne Clifford, Countess of Cumberland, Pembroke, and Dorset, who erected monuments to Spenser, Drayton, and Daniel; and above them all, though living a little later, the Queen herself, Henrietta Maria, whose feminine caprices, French graces, and brilliant eyes, rendered her a

* Daughter of the first Earl of Devonshire, of the Cavendish family. She was celebrated by Sidney Godolphin in some very sweet lines, which contain a lovely female portrait. Waller's verses on her sudden death are remarkable for a signal instance of the pathos.

That horrid word, at once like lightning spread,
Struck all our ears,—*the Lady Rich is dead!*

very splendid and fruitful theme for the poets of the time.*

There was at this time a kind of traffic between rich beauties and poor poets. The ladies who, in earlier ages, were proud in proportion to the quantity of blood spilt in honor of their charms, were now seized with a passion for being be-rhymed. Surrey, and his Geraldine, began this taste in England by introducing the school of Petrarch: and Sir Philip Sydney had entreated women to listen to those poets who promised them immortality,—"For thus doing, ye shall be most fair, most wise, most rich, most every thing!—ye shall dwell upon superlatives:"† and women believed accordingly. In spite of the satirist, I do maintain, that the love of praise and the love of pleasing are paramount in our sex, both to the love of pleasure and the love of sway.

This connection between the high-born beauties and the poets was at first delightful, and honorable to both; but in time it became degraded and abused. The fees paid for dedications, odes, and sonnets, were any thing but sentimental;—can we wonder if, under such circumstances, the profession of a poet "was connected with personal abasement, which made it disreputable?"‡ or that women, while they required the tribute, despised those who paid it,—and were paid for it?—not in

* See Waller, Carew, D'Avenant: the latter has paid her some exquisite compliments.

† Sir Philip Sydney's Works, "Defence of Poesie."

‡ Scott's Life of Dryden, p. 89.

sweet looks, soft smiles, and kind wishes, but with silver and gold, a cover at her ladyship's table "below the salt," or a bottle of sack from my lord's cellar. It followed, as a thing of course, that our amatory and lyric poetry declined, and instead of the genuine rapture of tenderness, the glow of imagination, and all "the purple light of love," we have too often only a heap of glittering and empty compliment and metaphysical conceits. —It was a miserable state of things.

It must be confessed that the aspiring loves of some of our poets have not proved auspicious even when successful. Dryden married Lady Elizabeth Howard, the daughter of the Earl of Berkshire: but not "all the blood of all the Howards" could make her either wise or amiable: he had better have married a milkmaid. She was weak in intellect, and violent in temper. Sir Walter Scott observes, very feelingly, that "The wife of one who is to gain his livelihood by poetry, or by any labor (if any there be) equally exhausting, must either have taste enough to relish her husband's performances, or good-nature sufficient to pardon his infirmities." It was Dryden's misfortune, that Lady Elizabeth had neither one nor the other.

Of all our really great poets, Dryden is the one least indebted to woman, and to whom, in return, women are least indebted: he is almost devoid of *sentiment* in the true meaning of the word.—"His idea of the female character was low;" his homage to beauty was not of that kind which beauty should

be proud to receive.* When he attempted the praise of women, it was in a strain of fulsome, far-fetched, labored adulation, which betrayed his insincerity; but his genius was at home when we were the subject of licentious tales and coarse satire.

It was through this inherent want of refinement and true respect for our sex, that he deformed Boccaccio's lovely tale of Gismunda; and as the Italian novelist has sins enough of his own to answer for, Dryden might have left him the beauties of this tender story, unsullied by the profane coarseness of his own taste. In his tragedies, his heroines on stilts, and his draw-cansir heroes, whine, rant, strut and rage, and tear passion to tatters—to very rags; but love, such as it exists in gentle, pure, unselfish bosoms—love, such as it glows in the pages of Shakspeare and Spenser, Petrarch and Tasso,—such love

> As doth become mortality
> Glancing at heaven,

he could not imagine or appreciate, far less express or describe. He could portray a Cleopatra; but he could not conceive a Juliet. His ideas of our sex seem to have been formed from a profligate actress,† and a silly, wayward, provoking wife; and we have avenged ourselves,—for Dryden is

* With the exception of the dedication of his Palamon and Arcite, to the young and beautiful Duchess of Ormonde, (Lady Anne Somerset, daughter of the Duke of Beaufort.)

† Mrs. Reeves, his mistress; she afterwards became a nun.

not the poet of women; and, of all our English classics, is the least honored in a lady's library.

Dryden was the original of the famous repartee to be found, I believe, in every jest book: shortly after his marriage, Lady Elizabeth, being rather annoyed at her husband's very studious habits, wished herself *a book*, that she might have a little more of his attention—"Yes, my dear," replied Dryden, "an almanac."—"Why an almanac?" asked the wife innocently.—"Because then, my dear, I should change you once a year." The laugh, of course, is on the side of the wit; but Lady Elizabeth was a young spoiled beauty of rank, married to a man she loved; and her wish, methinks, was very feminine and natural: if it was spoken with petulance and bitterness, it deserved the repartee; if with tenderness and playfulness, the wit of the reply can scarcely excuse its ill-nature.

Addison married the Countess of Warwick. Poor man! I believe his patrician bride did every thing but beat him. His courtship had been long, timid, and anxious; and at length, the lady was persuaded to marry him, on terms much like those on which a Turkish Princess is espoused, to whom the Sultan is reported to pronounce, "Daughter, I give thee this man to be thy slave."* They were only three years married, and those were years of bitterness.

Young, the author of the Night Thoughts,

* Johnson's Life of Addison.

married Lady Elizabeth Lee, the daughter of the Earl of Litchfield, and grand-daughter of the too famous, or more properly, infamous Duchess of Cleveland:—the marriage was not a happy one. I think, however, in the last two instances, the ladies were not entirely to blame.

But these, it will be said, are the wives of poets, not the loves of the poets; and the phrases are not synonymous,—*au contraire*. This is a question to be asked and examined; and I proceed to examine it accordingly. But as I am about to take the field on new ground, it will require a new chapter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONJUGAL POETRY.

If it be generally true, that love, to be poetical, must be wreathed with the willow and the cypress, as well as the laurel and the myrtle—still it is not *always* true. It is not, happily, a necessary condition, that a passion, to be constant, must be unfortunate; that faithful lovers must needs be wretched; that conjugal tenderness and "domestic doings" are ever dull and invariably prosaic. The witty invectives of some of our poets, whose domestic misery stung them into satirists, and blas-

phemers of a happiness denied to them, are familiar in the memory—ready on the lips of common-place scoffers. But of matrimonial poetics, in a far different style, we have instance sufficient to put to shame such heartless raillery; that there are not more, is owing to the reason which Klopstock has given, when writing of his angelic Meta. "A man," said he, "should speak of his wife as seldom and with as much modesty as of himself."

A woman is not under the same restraint in speaking of her husband; and this distinction arises from the relative position of the two sexes. It is a species of vain-glory to boast of a possession; but we may exult, unreproved, in the virtues of him who disposes of our fate. Our inferiority has here given to us, as women, so high and dear a privilege, that it is a pity we have been so seldom called on to exert it.

The first instance of conjugal poetry which occurs to me, will perhaps startle the female reader for it is no other than the gallant Ovid himself. One of the epistles, written during his banishment to Pontus, is addressed to his wife Perilla, and very tenderly alludes to their mutual affection, and to the grief she must have suffered during his absence.

And thou, whom young I left when leaving Rome,
Thou, by my woes art haply old become:
Grant, heaven! that such I may behold thy face,
And thy changed cheek, with dear loved kisses trace;
Fold thy diminished person, and exclaim,
Regret for me has thinned this beauteous frame.

Here then we have the most abandoned libertine of his profligate times reduced at last in his old age, in disgrace and exile, to throw himself, for sympathy and consolation, into the arms of a tender and amiable wife; and this, after spending his life and talents in deluding the tenderness, corrupting the virtue, and reviling the characters of women. In truth, half a dozen volumes in praise of our sex could scarce say more than this.

Every one, I believe, recollects the striking story of Paulina, the wife of Seneca. When the order was brought from Nero that he should die, she insisted upon dying with him, and by the same operation. She accordingly prepared to be bled to death; but fainting away in the midst of her sufferings, Seneca commanded her wounds to be bound up, and conjured her to live. She lived therefore; but excessive weakness and loss of blood gave her, during the short remainder of her life that spectral appearance which has caused her conjugal fidelity and her pallid hue to pass into a proverb,—"as pale as Seneca's Paulina;" and be it remembered, that Paulina was at this time young in comparison of her husband, who was old and singularly ugly.

This picturesque story of Paulina affects us in our younger years; but at a later period we are more likely to sympathize with the wife of Lucan, Polla Argentaria, who beheld her husband perish by the same death as his uncle Seneca, and through love for his fame, consented to survive him. She

appears to have been the original after whom he drew his beautiful portrait of Cornelia the wife of Pompey. Lucan had left the manuscript of the Pharsalia in an imperfect state; and his wife who had been in its progress his amanuensis, his counsellor and confidant, and therefore best knew his wishes and intentions, undertook to revise and copy it with her own hand. During the rest of her life, which was devoted to this dear and pious task, she had the bust of Lucan always placed beside her couch, and his works lying before her: and in the form in which Polla Argentaria left it, his great poem has descended to our times.

I have read also, though I confess my acquaintance with the classics is but limited, of a certain Latin poetess, Sulpicia, who celebrated her husband Calenas: and the poet Ausonius composed many fine verses in praise of a beautiful and virtuous wife, whose name I forget.*

But I feel I am treading unsafe ground, rendered so both by my ignorance, and by my prejudices as a woman. Generally speaking, the heroines of classical poetry and history are not much to my taste; in their best virtues they were a little masculine, and in their vices so completely unsexed, that one would rather not think of them—speak of them—far less write of them.

* * * * *

The earliest instance I can recollect of modern conjugal poetry, is taken from a country, and a

* Elton's Specimens.

class, and a time where one would scarce look for high poetic excellence inspired by conjugal tenderness. It is that of a Frenchwoman of high rank, in the fifteenth century, when France was barbarized by the prevalence of misery, profligacy, and bloodshed, in every revolting form.

Marguèrite-Eléonore-Clotilde de Surville, of the noble family of Vallon Chalys, was the wife of Berenger de Surville, and lived in those disastrous times which immediately succeeded the battle of Agincourt. She was born in 1405, and educated in the court of the Count de Foix, where she gave an early proof of literary and poetical talent, by translating, when eleven years old, one of Petrarch's Canzoni, with a harmony of style wonderful, not only for her age, but for the times in which she lived. At the age of sixteen she married the Chevalier du Surville, then, like herself, in the bloom of youth, and to whom she was passionately attached. In those days no man of noble blood, who had a feeling for the misery of his country, or a hearth and home to defend, could avoid taking an active part in the scenes of barbarous strife around him; and De Surville, shortly after his marriage, followed his heroic sovereign, Charles the Seventh, to the field. During his absence, his wife addressed to him the most beautiful effusions of conjugal tenderness to be found, I think, in the compass of poetry. In the time of Clotilde, French verse was not bound down by those severe laws and artificial restraints by which it has

since been shackled: we have none of the prettinesses, the epigrammatic turns, the sparkling points, and elaborate graces, which were the fashion in the days of Louis Quatorze. Boileau would have shrugged up his shoulders, and elevated his eyebrows, at the rudeness of the style; but Molière, who preferred

J'aime mieux ma mie, oh gai!

to all the *fades galanteries* of his contemporary *bels esprits*, would have been enchanted with the naïve tenderness, the freshness and flow of youthful feeling which breathe through the poetry of Clotilde. The antique simplicity of the old French lends it such an additional charm, that though in making a few extracts, I have ventured to modernize the spelling, I have not attempted to alter a word of the original.

Clotilde has entitled her first epistle "Heroïde à mon époux Bérenger;" and as it is dated in 1422, she could not have been more than seventeen when it was written. The commencement recalls the superscription of the first letter of Heloise to Abelard.

Clotilde, au sien ami, douce mande accolade!
A son époux, salut, respect, amour!
Ah, tandis qu'eplorée et de cœur si malade,
Te quier * la nuit, te redemande au jour—
Que deviens? où cours tu? Loin de ta bien-aimée,
Où les destins, entrainent donc tes pas?

* Querir.

'Faut que le dise, hèlas! s'en crois la renommée
De bien long temps ne te reverrai pas?

She then describes her lonely state, her grief for his absence, her pining for his return. She laments the horrors of war which have torn him from her; but in a strain of eloquent poetry, and in the spirit of a high-souled woman, to whom her husband's honor was dear as his life, she calls on him to perform all that his duty as a brave knight, and his loyalty to his sovereign require. She reminds him, with enthusiasm, of the motto of French chivalry, "mourir plutôt que trahir son devoir;" then suddenly breaking off, with a graceful and wife-like modesty, she wonders at her own presumption thus to address her lord, her husband, the son of a race of heroes,—

Mais que dis! ah d'où vient qu'orgueilleuse t'advise!
Toi, escolier! toi, l'enfant des heros!
Pardonne maintes soucis à celle qui t'adore—
A tant d'amour, est permis quelque effroi.

She describes herself looking out from the tower of her castle to watch the return of his banner; she tells him how she again and again visits the scenes endeared by the remembrance of their mutual happiness. The most beautiful touches of description are here mingled with the fond expressions of feminine tenderness.

Là, me dis-je, ai reçu sa dernière caresse,
Et jusqu'aux os, soudain, me sens bruler.

Ici les ung ormeil, cerclé par aubespine
Que doux printemps jà * courronnait de **fleurs,**
Me dit adieu—Sanglots suffoquent ma poctrine,
Et dans mes yeux roulent torrents de pleurs.
* * * * *
D'autresfòis, écartant ces cruelles images,
Crois m'enfonçant au plus dense des bois,
Mêler des rossignols aux amoureuse ramages,
Entre tes bras, mon amoureux voix:
Me semble ouïr, échappant de ta bouche rosée,
Ces mots gentils, qui me font tressaillir,
Ainz † vois au mème instant que me suis abusée
Et soupirant, suis prête à défailler!

After indulging in other regrets, expressed with rather more naïveté than suits the present taste, she bursts into an eloquent invective against the English invaders,‡ and the factious nobles of France, whose crimes and violence detained her husband from her arms.

Quand reverrai, dis-moi, ton si duisant § visage?
Quand te pourrai face à face mirer?
T'enlacer tellement à mon frément ‖ corsage,
Que toi, ni moi, n'en puissions respirer?

and she concludes with this tender *envoi:*

Où, que suives ton roi, ne mets ta douce amie
En tel oubli, qu'ignore où git ce lieu:
Jusqu'alors en souci, de calme n'aura mie,—
Plus ne t'en dis—que t'en souvienne! adieu!

* Jà—jadis (the old French *ja* is the Italian *già.*)
† Ainz:—cependant (the Italian *anzi.*)
‡ She calls them the "Vultures of Albion."
§ Duisant, *séduisant.* ‖ Frémissant.

Clotilde became a mother before the return of her husband; and the delicious moment in which she first placed her infant in his father's arms, suggested the verses she has entitled "Ballade à mon époux, lors, quand tournait après un an d'absence, mis en ses bras notre fils enfançon."

The pretty burden of this little ballad has often been quoted.

Faut être deux pour avoir du plaisir,
Plaisir ne l'est qu'autant qu'on le partage!

But, says the mother,

Un tiers si doux ne fait tort à plaisir?

and should her husband be again torn from her, she will console herself in his absence, by teaching the boy to lisp his father's name.

Gentil époux! si Mars et ton courage
Plus contraignaient ta Clotilde à gémir,
De lui montrer en son petit langage,
A t'appeller ferai tout mon plaisir—
Plaisir ne l'est qu'autant qu'on le partage!

Among some other little poems, which place the conjugal and maternal character of Clotilde in a most charming light, I must notice one more for its tender and heart-felt beauty. It is entitled "Ballade à mon premier né," and is addressed to her child, apparently in the absence of its father.

O chèr enfantelet, vrai portrait de ton père!
Dors sur le sein que ta bouche a pressé!

Dors petit!—clos, ami, sur le sein de ta mère,
Tien doux œillet, par le somme oppressé.
Bel ami—chèr petit! que ta pupille tendre,
Goute un sommeil que plus n'est fait pour moi:
Je veille pour te voir, te nourir, te defendre,
Ainz qu'il est doux ne veiller que pour toi!

Contemplating him asleep, she says,

N'était ce teint fleuri des couleurs de la pomme,
Ne le diriez vous dans les bras de la mort?

Then, shuddering at the idea she had conjured up, she breaks forth into a passionate apostrophe to her sleeping child,

Arrête, chèr enfant! j'en frémis toute entière—
Reveille toi! chasse un fatal propos!
Mon fils . . . pour un moment—ah revois la lumière!
Au prix du tien, rends-moi tout mon répos!
Douce erreur! il dormait . . . c'est, assez, je respire.
Songes lègers, flattez son doux sommeil;
Ah! quand verrai celui pour qui mon cœur soupire,
Au miens cotés jouir de son réveil?
* * * * *
Quand reverrai celui dont as reçu la vie?
Mon jeune époux, le plus beau des humains
Oui—déja crois voir ta mère, aux cieux ravie,
Que tends vers lui tes innocentes mains.
Comme ira se duisant à ta première caresse!
Au miens baisers com' t'ira disputant!
Ainz ne compte, à toi seul, d'épuiser sa tendresse,—
A sa Clotilde en garde bien autant!

Along the margin of the original MS. of this poem, was written an additional stanza, in the same hand, and quite worthy of the rest.

Voilà ses traits . . . son air . . . voilà tout ce que j'aime! Feu de son œil, et roses de son teint . . . .

D'où vient m'en ébahir? *autre qu'en tout lui même, Put-il jamais éclore de mon sein?*

This is beautiful and true ; beautiful, because it is true. There is nothing of fancy nor of art, the intense feeling gushes, warm and strong, from the heart of the writer, and it comes home to the heart of the reader, filling it with sweetness.—Am I wrong in supposing that the occasional obscurity of the old French will not disguise the beauty of the sentiment from the young wife or mother, whose eye may glance over this page?

It is painful, it is pitiful, to draw the veil of death and sorrow over this sweet picture.

> What is this world? what asken men to have?
> Now with his love—now in his cold grave,
> Alone, withouten any companie!*

De Surville closed his brief career of happiness and glory (and what more than these could he have asked of Heaven?) at the siege of Orleans, where he fought under the banner of Joan of Arc.† He was a gallant and a loyal knight; so were hundreds of others who then strewed the desolated fields of France: and De Surville had fallen undistinguished amid the general havoc of all that was noble and brave, if the love and genius of his wife had not immortalized him.

Clotilde, after her loss, resided in the château

* Chaucer.

† He perished in 1429, leaving his widow in her twenty-fourth year.

of her husband, in the Lyonnois, devoting herself to literature and the education of her son: and it is very remarkable, considering the times in which she lived, that she neither married again, nor entered a religious house. The fame of her poetical talents, which she continued to cultivate in her retirement, rendered her at length, an object of celebrity and interest. The Duke of Orleans happened one day to repeat some of her verses to Margaret of Scotland, the first wife of Louis the Eleventh; and that accomplished patroness of poetry and poets wrote her an invitation to attend her at court, which Clotilde modestly declined. The Queen then sent her, as a token of her admiration and friendship, a wreath of laurel, surmounted with a bouquet of daisies, (Marguèrites, in allusion to the name of both,) the leaves of which were wrought in silver and the flowers in gold, with this inscription: "Marguerite d'Ecosse à Marguèrite d'Helicon." We are told that Alain Chartier, envious perhaps of these distinctions, wrote a satirical *quatrain*, in which he accused Clotilde of being deficient in *l'air de cour*, and that she replied to him, and defended herself in a very spirited *rondeau*. Nothing more is known of the life of this interesting woman, but that she had the misfortune to survive her son as well as her husband; and dying at the advanced age of ninety, in 1495, she was buried with them in the same tomb.*

* Les Poëtes Français jusqu'à Malherbes, par Augin. A good edition of the works of Clotilde de Surville was published at

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONJUGAL POETRY, CONTINUED.

VITTORIA COLONNA.

HALF a century later, we find the name of an Italian poetess, as interesting as our Clotilde de Surville, and far more illustrious. Vittoria Colonna was not thrown, with all her eminent gifts and captivating graces, among a rude people in a rude age; but all favorable influences, of time and circumstances, and fortune, conspired, with native talent, to make her as celebrated as she was truly admirable. She was the wife of that Marquis of Pescara, who has earned himself a name in the busiest and bloodiest page of history:—of that Pescara who commanded the armies of Charles the Fifth in Italy, and won the battle of Pavia, where Francis the First was taken prisoner. But great as was Pescara as a statesman and a military commander, he is far more interesting as the husband of Vittoria Colonna; and the laurels he reaped in the battle-

Paris in 1802, and another in 1804. I believe both have become scarce. Her *Poësies* consist of pastorals, ballads, songs, epistles, and the fragment of an epic poem, of which the MS. is lost. Of her merit there is but one opinion. She is confessedly the greatest poetical genius which France could boast in a period of two hundred years; that is, from the decline of the Provençal poetry, till about 1500.

field, are perishable and worthless, compared to those which his admirable wife wreathed around his brow. So thought Ariosto; who tells us, that if Alexander envied Achilles the fame he had acquired in the songs of Homer, how much more had he envied Pescara those strains in which his gifted consort had exalted his fame above that of all contemporary heroes? and not only rendered herself immortal;

> Col dolce stil, di che il miglior non odo,
> Ma può qualunque, di cui parli o scriva
> Trar dal sepolcro, e fa ch' eterno viva.

He prefers her to Artemisia, for a reason rather quaintly expressed,—

> ——Anzi
> Tanto maggior, quanto è più assai bell' opra,
> Che por sotterra un uom, trarlo di sopra.

"So much more praise it is, to raise a man above the earth, than to bury him under it." He compares her successively to all the famed heroines of Greece and Rome,—to Laodamia, to Portia, to Arria, to Argia, to Evadne,—who died with or for their husbands; and concludes,

> Quanto onore a Vittoria è più dovuto
> Che di Lete, e del Rio che nove volte
> L' ombre circonda, ha tratto il suo consorte,
> Malgrado delle parche, e della morte.*

In fact, at a period when Italy could boast of a

* Orlando Furioso, canto 37.

constellation of female talent, such as never before or since adorned any one country at the same time, and besides a number of women accomplished in languages, philosophy, and the abstruser branches of learning, reckoned sixty poetesses, nearly contemporary, there was not one to be compared with Vittoria Colonna,—herself the theme of song; and upon whom her enthusiastic countrymen have lavished all the high-sounding superlatives of a language, so rich in expressive and sonorous epithets, that it seems to multiply fame and magnify praise. We find Vittoria designated in Italian biography, as *Diva*, divina, maravigliosa, eletissima, illustrissima, virtuosissima, dottissima, castissima, gloriosissima, &c.

But immortality on earth, as in heaven, must be purchased at a certain price; and Vittoria, rich in all the gifts which heaven, and nature, and fortune combined, ever lavished on one of her sex, paid for her celebrity with her happiness; for thus it has ever been, and must ever be, in this world of ours, "où les plus belles choses ont le pire destin."

Her descent was illustrious on both sides. She was the daughter of the Grand Constable Fabrizio Colonna, and of Anna di Montefeltro, daughter of the Duke of Urbino, and was born about 1490. At four years old she was destined to seal the friendship which existed between her own family and that of d'Avalo, by a union with the young Count d'Avalo, afterwards Marquis of Pescara, who was exactly her own age. Such infant marriages are

contracted at a fearful risk; yet, if auspicious, the habit of loving from an early age, and the feeling of settled appropriation, prevent the affections from wandering, and plant a mutual happiness upon a foundation much surer than that of fancy or impulse. It was so in this instance,

> Conforme era l' etate
> Ma 'l pensier più conforme.

Vittoria, from her childish years, displayed the most extraordinary talents, combined with all the personal charms and sweet proprieties more characteristic of her sex. When not more than fifteen or sixteen, she was already distinguished among her countrywomen, and sought even by sovereign princes. The Duke of Savoy and the Duke of Braganza made overtures to obtain her hand; the Pope himself interfered in behalf of one of these princes; but both were rejected. Vittoria, accustomed to consider herself as the destined bride of young d'Avalo, cultivated for him alone those talents and graces which others admired and coveted, and resolved to wait till her youthful lover was old enough to demand the ratification of their infant vows. She says of herself,

> Appena avean gli spirti intera vita,
> Quando il mio cor proscrisse ogn' altro oggetto.

Pescara had not the studious habits or literary talents of his betrothed bride; but his beauty of person, his martial accomplishments, and his brave and noble nature, were precisely calculated to

impress her poetical imagination, as contrasted with her own gentler and more contemplative character. He loved her too with the most enthusiastic adoration; he even prevailed on their mutual parents to anticipate the period fixed for their nuptials; and at the age of seventeen they were solemnly united.

The first four years after their marriage were chiefly spent in a delightful retreat in the island of Ischia, where Pescara had a palace and domain. Here, far from the world, and devoted to each other, and to the most elegant pursuits, they seem to have revelled in such bliss as poets fancy and romancers feign. Hence the frequent allusions to the island of Ischia, in Vittoria's later poems, as a spot beloved by her husband, and the scene of their youthful happiness. One thing alone was wanting to complete this happiness: Heaven denied them children. She laments this disappointment in the 22d Sonnet, where she says, that "since she may not be the mother of sons, who shall inherit their father's glory, yet she will at least, by uniting her name with his in verse, become the mother of his illustrious deeds and lofty fame."

Pescara, whose active and martial genius led him to take a conspicuous part in the wars which then agitated Italy, at length quitted his wife to join the army of the Emperor. Vittoria, with tears resigned him to his duty. On his departure she presented him with many tokens of love, and among the rest, with a banner, and a dressing-

gown richly embroidered; on the latter she had worked with her own hand, in silken characters, the motto, "Nunquam minus otiosus quam cum otiosus erat."* She also presented him with some branches of palm, "In segno di felice augurio;" but her bright anticipations were at first cruelly disappointed. Pescara, then in his twenty-second year, commanded as general of cavalry at the battle of Ravenna, where he was taken prisoner, and detained at Milan. While in confinement, he amused his solitude by showing his Vittoria that he had not forgotten their mutual studies and early happiness at Ischia. He composed an essay or dialogue on Love, which he addressed to her; and which, we are told, was remarkable for its eloquence and spirit as a composition, as well as for the most high-toned delicacy of sentiment. He was not liberated till the following year.

Vittoria had taken for her *devise*, such was the fashion of the day, a little Cupid within a circle formed by a serpent, with the motto, "Quem peperit virtus prudentia servet amorem,"—"The love which virtue inspired, discretion shall guard;" and during her husband's absence, she lived in retirement, principally in her loved retreat in the island of Ischia, devoting her time to literature, and to the composition of those beautiful Sonnets in which she celebrated the exploits and virtues of her husband. He, whenever his military or political duties allowed of a short absence from the

* "Never less idle than when idle."

theatre of war, flew to rejoin her; and these short and delicious meetings, and the continual dangers to which he was exposed, seem to have kept alive, through many long years, all the romance and fervor of their early love. In the 79th Sonnet, Vittoria so beautifully alludes to one of these meetings, that I am tempted to extract it, in preference to others better known, and by many esteemed superior as compositions.

Qui fece il mio bel sol a noi ritorno,
Di Regie spoglie carco, e ricche prede;
Ahi! con quanto dolor, l'occhio rivede
Quei lochi, ov' ei mi fea già il giorno!

Di mille glorie allor cinto d'intorno,
E d' onor vero, alla più altiera sede
Facean delle opre udite intera fede
L' ardito volto, il parlar saggio adorno.

Vinto da prieghi miei, poi mi mostrava
Le belle cicatrici, e 'l tempo, e 'l modo
Delle vittorie sue tante, e si chiare.

Quanta pena or mi da, gioja mi dava;
E in questo, e in quel pensier, piangendo godo
Tra poche dolci, e assai lagrime amare.

This description of her husband returning, loaded with spoils and honors;—of her fond admiration, mingled with a feminine awe of his warlike demeanor;—of his yielding, half reluctant, to her tender entreaties, and showing her the wounds he had received in battle;—then the bitter thoughts

of his danger and absence, mingling with, and interrupting these delicious recollections of happiness,—are all as true to feeling as they are beautiful in poetry.

After a short career of glory, Pescara was at length appointed commander-in-chief of the Imperial armies, and gained the memorable battle of Pavia. Feared by his enemies, and adored by his soldiers, his power was at this time so great, that many attempts were made to shake his fidelity to the Emperor. Even the kingdom of Naples was offered to him if he would detach himself from the party of Charles the Fifth. Pescara was not without ambition, though without "the ill that should attend it." He wavered—he consulted his wife;—he expressed his wish to place her on a throne she was so fitted to adorn. That admirable and high-minded woman wrote to confirm him in the path of honor, and besought him not to sell his faith and truth, and his loyalty to the cause in which he had embarked, for a kingdom. "For me," she said, "believe that I do not desire to be the wife of a King; I am more proud to be the wife of that great captain, who in war by his valor, and in peace by his magnanimity, has vanquished the greatest monarchs."*

On receiving this letter, Pescara hastened to

* "Non desidero d'esser moglie d'un re; bensi di quel gran capitano, il quale non solamente in guerra con valor, ma ancora in pace con la magnanimità ha saputo vincere i re più grande." (Vita di Vittoria Colonna, da Giambattista Rota.)

shake off the subtle tempters round him; but he had previously become so far entangled, that he did not escape without some impeachment of his before stainless honor. The bitter consciousness of this, and the effects of some desperate wounds he had received at the battle of Pavia, which broke out afresh, put a period to his life at Milan, in his thirty-fifth year.*

The Marchesana was at Naples when the news of his danger arrived. She immediately set out to join him; but was met at Viterbo by a courier bearing the tidings of his death. On hearing this intelligence, she fainted away; and being brought a little to herself, sank into a stupor of grief, which alarmed her attendants for her reason or her life. Seasonable tears at length came to her relief; but her sorrow, for a long, long time, admitted no alleviation. She retired, after her first overwhelming anguish had subsided, to her favorite residence in the isle of Ischia, where she spent, almost uninterruptedly, the first seven years of her widowhood.

Being only in her thirty-fifth year, in the prime of her life and beauty, and splendidly dowered, it was supposed that she would marry again, and many of the Princes of Italy sought her hand; her brothers urged it; but she replied to their entreaties and remonstrances, with a mixture of dignity and tenderness, that "Though her noble husband might be by others reputed dead, he still

* See in Robertson's Charles V. an account of the generous conduct of Pescara to the Chevalier Bayard.

lived to her, and to her heart." * And in one of her poems, she alludes to these attempts to shake her constancy. "I will preserve," she says, "the title of a faithful wife to my beloved,—a title dear to me beyond every other; and on this island rock,† once so dear to *him*, will I wait patiently, till time brings the end of all my griefs, as once of all my joys."

D' arder sempre piangendo non mi doglio!
Forse avrò di fedele il titol vero,
Caro a me sopra ogn' altro eterno onore.
Non cambierò la fe,—ne questo scoglio
Ch' al *mio sol* piacque, ove finire spero
Come le dolci già, quest' amore ore! ‡

This Sonnet was written in the seventh year of her widowhood. She says elsewhere, that her heart having once been so nobly bestowed, disdains a meaner chain; and that her love had not ceased with the death of its object.—

Di cosi nobil fiamma amore mi cinse,
Ch' essendo spenta, in me viva l' ardore.

There is another, addressed to the poet, Molza, in which she alludes to the fate of his parents, who, by a singular providence, both expired in the same day and hour; such a fate appeared to her

* Che il suo sole, quantunque dagli altri fosse riputato morte, appresso di lei sempre re vivea. (Vita.)

† Ischia. ‡ Sonnet 74.

worthy of envy; and she laments very tenderly that Heaven had doomed her to survive him with whom her heart lay buried. There are others addressed to Cardinal Bembo, in which she thus excuses herself for making Pescara the subject of her verse.

> Scrivo sol per sfogar l' interna doglia;
> La pura fe, l' ardor, l' intensa pena
> Mi scusa appo ciascun; che 'l grave pianto
> E tal, che tempo, ne raggion l' affrena.

There is also a Canzone by Vittoria, full of poetry and feeling, in which she alludes to the loss of that beauty which once she was proud to possess, because it was dear in her husband's sight. "Look down upon me," she exclaims, "from thy seat of glory! look down upon me with those eyes that ever turned with tenderness on mine! Behold, how misery has changed me; how all that once was beauty is fled!—and yet I am—I am the same!"—(Io son—io son ben dessa!)—But no translation—none at least that I could execute—would do justice to the deep pathos, the feminine feeling, and the eloquent simplicity of this beautiful and celebrated poem. The reader will find it in Mathias's collection.*

After the lapse of several years, her mind, elevated by the very nature of her grief, took a strong devotional turn; and from this time, we find her poetry entirely consecrated to sacred subjects.

* Componimenti Lirici, vol. i. 144.

The first of these *Rime spirituali* is exquisitely beautiful. She allows that the anguish she had felt on the death of her noble husband, was not alleviated, but rather nourished and kept alive in all its first poignancy, by constantly dwelling on the theme of his virtues and her own regrets; that the thirst of fame, and the possession of glory, could not cure the pining sickness of her heart; and that she now turned to Heaven as a last and best resource against sorrow.*

Poichè 'l mio casto amor, gran tempo tenne
L' alma di fama accesa, ed ella un angue
In sen nudrio, per cui dolente or langue,—
Volta al Signor, onde il remedio venne.
* * * *
Chiamar qui non convien Parnasso o Delo;
Ch' ad altra acqua s' aspira, ad altro monte
Si poggia, u' piede uman per se non sale.

Not the least of Vittoria's titles to fame, was the intense adoration with which she inspired Michel Angelo. Condivi says he was enamoured of her divine talents. "In particolare egli amò grande-

* L' honneur d'avoir été, entre toutes les poëtes, la première à composer un recueil de poësies sacrées, appartient, toute entière, à Vittoria Colonna. (See Ginguené.) Her masterpieces, in this style, are said to be the sonnet on the death of our Saviour,—

"Gli Angeli eletti al gran bene infinìte"

and the hymn

"Padre Eterno del cielo!"

which is sublime; it may be found in Mathias's Collection, vol. iii.

mente la Marchesana di Pescara, del cui divino spirito ara inamorato;" and he makes use of a strong expression to describe the admiration and friendship she felt for him in return. She was fifteen years younger than Michel Angelo, who not only employed his pencil and his chisel for her pleasure, or at her suggestion, but has left among his poems several which are addressed to her, and which breathe that deep and fervent, yet pure and reverential love she was as worthy to inspire as he was to feel.

I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of adding here one of the Sonnets, addressed by Michel Angelo to the Marchesana of Pescara, as translated by Wordsworth, in a peal of grand harmony, almost as *literally* faithful to the expression as to the spirit of the original.

SONNET.

Yes! hope may with my strong desire keep pace,
And I be undeluded, unbetrayed;
For if of our affections none find grace
In sight of Heaven, then, wherefore hath God made
The world which we inhabit? Better plea
Love cannot have, than that in loving thee
Glory to that eternal peace is paid,
Who such divinity to thee imparts
As hallows and makes pure all gentle hearts.
His hope is treacherous only whose love dies
With beauty, which is varying every hour:
But, in chaste hearts, uninfluenced by the power
Of outward change, there blooms a deathless flower,
That breathes on earth the air of Paradise.

He stood by her in her last moments; and when her lofty and gentle spirit had forsaken its fair tenement, he raised her hand and kissed it with a sacred respect. He afterwards expressed to an intimate friend, his regret, that being oppressed by the awful feelings of that moment, he had not, for the first and last time, pressed his lips to hers.

Vittoria had another passionate admirer in Galeazzo di Tarsia, Count of Belmonte in Calabria, and an excellent poet of that time.* His attachment was a poetical, but apparently not quite so Platonic, as that of Michel Angelo. His beautiful Canzone beginning,

> A quel pietra sommiglia
> La mia bella Colonna,

contains lines rather more impassioned than the modest and grave Vittoria could have approved; for example—

> Con lei foss' io da che si parte il sole,
> E non ci vedesse altri che le stelle,
> —Solo una notte—e mai non fosse l' Alba!

Marini and Bernardo Tasso were also numbered among her poets and admirers.

Vittoria Colonna died at Rome, in 1547. She was suspected of favoring in secret the reformed doctrines; but I do not know on what authority

* Died 1535.

Roscoe mentions this. Her noble birth, her admirable beauty, her illustrious marriage, her splendid genius, (which made her the worship of genius —and the theme of poets,) have rendered her one of the most remarkable of women; as her sorrows, her conjugal virtues, her innocence of heart, and elegance of mind, have rendered her one of the most interesting.

> " Where could she fix on mortal ground
> Those tender thoughts and high?
> Now peace the woman's heart hath found,
> And joy the poet's eye! "

Antiquity may boast its heroines; but it required virtues of a higher order to be a Vittoria Colonna, or a Lady Russell, than to be a Portia or an Arria. How much more graceful, and even more sublime, is the moral strength, the silent enduring heroism of the Christian, than the stern, impatient defiance of destiny, which showed so imposing in the heathen! How much more difficult is it sometimes to live than to die!

> Più val d' ogni vittoria un bel soffirire.

Or as Campbell has expressed nearly the same sentiment,

> To bear, is to conquer our fate!

CHAPTER XXV.

CONJUGAL POETRY, CONTINUED.

VERONICA GAMBARA.

VITTORIA COLONNA, and her famed friend and contemporary, Veronica, Countess of Correggio, are inseparable names in the history of Italian literature, as living at the same time, and equally ornaments of their sex. They resembled each other in poetical talent, in their domestic sorrows and conjugal virtues: in every other respect the contrast is striking. Vittoria, with all her genius, seems to have been as lovely, gentle, and feminine a creature as ever wore the form of woman.

> No lily—nô—nor fragrant hyacinth,
> Had half such softness, sweetness, blessedness.

Veronica, on the contrary, was one,

> —— to whose masculine spirit
> To touch the stars had seemed an easy flight.

She added to her talents and virtues, strong passions,—and happily also sufficient energy of mind to govern and direct them. She had not Vittoria's personal charms: it is said, that if her face had equalled her form, she would have been one of the

most beautiful women of her time; but her features were irregular, and her grand commanding figure, which in her youth was admired for its perfect proportions, grew large and heavy as she advanced in life. She retained, however, to the last, the animation of her countenance, the dignity of her deportment, and powers of conversation so fascinating, that none ever approached her without admiration, or quitted her society without regret.

Her verses have not the polished harmony and the graceful suavity of Vittoria's; but more vigor of expression, and more vivacity of coloring. Their defects were equally opposed: the simplicity of Veronica sometimes borders upon harshness and carelessness; the uniform sweetness of Vittoria is sometimes too elaborate and artificial.

Veronica Gambara was born in 1485. Her *fortunate* parents, as her biographer expresses it,* were Count Gian Francisco Gambara, and Alda Pia. In her twenty-fifth year, when already distinguished as a poetess, and a woman of great and various learning, she married Ghiberto, Count of Correggio, to whom she appears to have been attached with all the enthusiasm of her character, and by whom she was tenderly loved in return. After the birth of her second son, she was seized with a dangerous disorder, of what nature we are not told. The physicians informed her husband that they did not despair of her recovery, but that the remedies they should be forced to employ

* Zamboni.

would probably preclude all hope of her becoming again a mother. The Count, who had always wished for a numerous offspring, ordered them to employ these remedies instantly, and save her to him at every other risk. She recovered; but the effects upon her constitution were such as had been predicted.

Like Vittoria Colonna, she made the personal qualities and renown of her husband the principal subjects of her verse. She dwells particularly on his fine dark eyes, expressing very gracefully the various feelings they excited in her heart, whether clouded with thought, or serene with happiness, or sparkling with affection.* She devotes six Sonnets and a Madrigal to this subject; and if we may believe his poetical and admiring wife, these "occhi stellante" could combine more variety of expression in a single glance than ever did eyes before or since.

Lieti, mesti, superbi, umili, altieri,
Vi mostrate in un punto; onde di speme
E di timor m' empiete.—

There is a great power and pathos in one of her poems, written on his absence.

O Stella! O Fato! del mio mal si avaro!
Ch' l mio ben m' allontani, anzi m' involi—
Fia mai quel di ch' io lo riveggia o mora? †

* "Molto vagamente spiegando i varj e differenti effetti che andavano cagionando nel di lei core, a misura che essi eran torbidi, o lieti, o sereni."—*See her Life by Zamboni.*

† Sonnet 16.

Veronica lost her husband, after nine years of the happiest union.* He gave her an incontrovertible proof of his attachment and boundless confidence, by leaving her his sole executrix, with the government of Correggio, and the guardianship of his children during their minority. Her grief on this occasion threw her into a dangerous and protracted fever, which during the rest of her life attacked her periodically. She says in one of her poems, that nothing but the fear of not meeting her beloved husband in Paradise prevented her from dying with him. She not only vowed herself to a perpetual widowhood, but to a perpetual mourning; and the extreme vivacity of her imagination was displayed in the strange trappings of woe with which she was henceforth surrounded. She lived in apartments hung and furnished with black, and from which every object of luxury was banished; her liveries, her coach, her horses, were of the same funereal hue. There is extant a curious letter addressed by her to Ludovico Rossi, in which she entreats her dear Messer Ludovico, by all their mutual friendship, to procure, at any price, a certain black horse, to complete her set of carriage horses—"più che notte oscuri, conformi, proprio a miei travagli." Over the door of her sleeping-room she inscribed the distich which Virgil has put into the mouth of Dido.

Ille meos, primus qui me sibi junxit, amores,
Abstulit: ille habeat secum servetque sepulchro!

* Ghiberto da Correggio died 1518.

He who once had my vows, shall ever have,
Beloved on earth and worshipped in the grave!

But, unlike Dido, she did not "profess too much." She kept her word. Neither did she neglect her duties; but more fortunate in one respect than her fair and elegant friend the Marchesana, she had two sons, to whose education she paid the utmost attention, while she administered the government of Correggio with equal firmness and gentleness. Her husband had left a daughter,* whom she educated and married with a noble dower. Her eldest son, Hypolito, became a celebrated military commander; her youngest and favorite son, Girolamo, was created a cardinal. Wherever Veronica loved, it seems to have been with the same passionate *abandon* which distinguished her character in every thing. Writing to a friend to recommend her son to his kind offices, she assures him that he (her son) is not only a part of herself—but rather *herself*. "Remember," she says, "Ch' egli è la Veronica medesima,"—a strong and tender expression.

We find her in correspondence with all the most illustrious characters, political and literary, of that time; and chiefly with Ariosto, Bembo, Molza, Sanazzaro, and Vittoria Colonna. Ariosto has paid her an elegant compliment in the last canto of the Orlando Furioso. She is one among the company of beautiful and accomplished women and noble knights, who hail the poet at the conclusion

* Constance, by his first wife, Violante di Mirandola.

of his work, as a long-travelled mariner is welcomed to the shore:

> Veronica da Gambara e con loro
> Si grata a Febo, e al santo aonio coro.

This was distinction enough to immortalize her, if she had not already immortalized herself.

Veronica was not a prolific poetess; but the few Sonnets she has left, have a vigor, a truth and simplicity, not often met with among the *rimatori* of that rhyming age. She has written fewer good poems than Vittoria Colonna, but among them, two which are reckoned superior to Vittoria's best, —one addressed to the rival monarchs, Charles the Fifth and Francis the First exhorting them to give peace to Italy, and unite their forces to protect civilized Europe from the incursions of the infidels; the other, which is exquisitely tender and picturesque, was composed on revisiting her native place, Brescia, after the death of her husband.

> Poi che per mia ventura a veder torno, &c.

It may be found in the collection of Mathias.

Veronica da Gambara died in 1550, and was buried by her husband.

It should seem that poetical talents and conjugal truth and tenderness were inherent in the family of Veronica. Her niece, Camilla Valentini, the authoress of some very sweet poems, which are to be found in various *Scelte*, married the Count del Verme, who died after a union of several years.

She had flung herself, in a transport of grief, on the body of her husband; and when her attendants attempted to remove her, they found her—dead! Even in that moment of anguish her heart had broken.

> O judge her gently, who so deeply loved!
> *Her*, who in reason's spite, without a crime,
> Was in a trance of passion thus removed!

* * * * *

I have been detained too long in "the sweet South;" yet, before we quit it for the present, I must allude to one or two names which cannot be entirely passed over, as belonging to the period of which we have been speaking—the golden age of Italy and of literature.

Bernardino Rota, who died in 1575, a poet of considerable power and pathos, has left a volume of poems, "In vita e in morte di Porzia Capece;" she was a beautiful woman of Naples, whom he loved and afterwards married, and who was snatched from him in the pride of her youth and beauty. Among his Sonnets, I find one peculiarly striking, though far from being the best. The picture it presents, with all its affecting accompaniments, and the feelings commemorated, are obviously taken from nature and reality. The poet—the husband—approaches to contemplate the lifeless form of his Portia, and weeping, he draws from her pale cold hand the nuptial ring, which he had himself placed on her finger with all the fond anticipations of love and hope—the pledge of a

union which death alone could dissolve: and now, with a breaking heart, he transfers it to his own. Such is the subject of this striking poem, which, with some few faults against taste, is still singularly picturesque and eloquent, particularly the last six lines.—

SONETTO.

Questa scolpita in oro, amica fede,
Che santo amor nel tuo bel dito pose,
O prima a me delle terrene cose!
Donna! caro mio pregio,—alta merced—
Ben fu da te serbata; e ben si vede
Che al cummun' voler' sempre rispose,
Del dì ch' il ciel nel mio pensier' t' ascose,
E quanto puote dar, tutto mi diede!

Ecco ch' io la t' invola—ecco ne spoglio
Il freddo avorio che l' ornava; e vesto
La mia, più assai che la tua, mano esangue.
Dolce mio furto! finchè vivo io voglio
Che tu stia meco—ne le sia molesto
Ch' or di pianto ti bagni,—e poi di sangue!

LITERAL TRANSLATION.

"This circlet of sculptured gold—this pledge which sacred affection placed on that fair hand—O Lady! dearest to me of all earthly things,—my sweet possession and my lovely prize,—well and faithfully didst thou preserve it! the bond of a mutual love and mutual faith, even from that hour when Heaven bestowed on me all it could bestow of bliss. Now then—O now do I take it from thee! and thus do I withdraw it from the cold ivory of that hand which so adorned and honored it. I place it on mine own, now chill, and damp, and pale as thine.

O beloved theft!—While I live thou shalt never part from me. Ah! be not offended if thus I stain thee with these tears,—and soon perhaps with life-drops from my heart."

* * * * *

Castiglione, besides being celebrated as the finest gentleman of his day, and the author of that code of all noble and knightly accomplishments, of perfect courtesy and gentle bearing—"Il Cortigiano," must have a place among our conjugal poets. He had married in 1516, Hypolita di Torrello, whose accomplishments, beauty, and illustrious birth, rendered her worthy of him. It appears, however, that her family, who were of Mantua, could not bear to part with her,* and that after her marriage, she remained in that city, while Castiglione was ambassador at Rome. This separation gave rise to a very impassioned correspondence; and the tender regrets and remonstrances scattered through her letters, he transposed into a very beautiful poem, in the form of an epistle from his wife. It may be found in the appendix to Roscoe's Leo X. (No. 196.) Hypolita died in giving birth to a daughter, after a union of little more than three years, and left Castiglione for some time inconsolable. We are particularly told of the sympathy of the Pope and the Cardinals, on this occasion, and that Leo condoled with him in a manner equally unusual and substantial, by bestowing on him immediately a pension of two hundred gold crowns.

* Serassi.—Vita di Baldassare Castiglione.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONJUGAL POETRY, CONTINUED.

STORY OF DR. DONNE AND HIS WIFE.

My next instance of conjugal poetry is taken from the literary history of our own country, and founded on as true and touching a piece of romance as ever was taken from the page of real life.

Dr. Donne, once so celebrated as a writer, now so neglected, is more interesting for his matrimonial history, and for one little poem addressed to his wife, than for all his learned, metaphysical, and theological productions. As a poet, it is probable that even readers of poetry know little of him, except from the lines at the bottom of the pages in Pope's version, or rather translation, of his Satires, the very recollection of which is enough to "set one's ears on edge," and verify Coleridge's witty and imitative couplet,—

> Donne—whose muse on dromedary trots,—
> Twists iron pokers into true love knots.

It is this inconceivable harshness of versification, which has caused Donne to be so little read, except by those who make our old poetry their study. One of these critics has truly observed, that "there is scarce a writer in our language who has so thor-

oughly mixed up the good and the bad together." What is good, is the result of truth, of passion, of a strong mind, and a brilliant wit; what is bad, is the effect of a most perverse taste, and total want of harmony. No sooner has he kindled the fancy with a splendid thought, than it is as instantly quenched in a cloud of cold and obscure conceits, no sooner has he touched the heart with a feeling or sentiment, true to nature and powerfully expressed, than we are chilled or disgusted by pedantry or coarseness.

The events of Donne's various life, and the romantic love he inspired and felt, make us recur to his works, with an interest and a curiosity, which, while they give a value to every beauty we can discover, render his faults more glaring—more provoking—more intolerable.

In his youth he lavished a considerable fortune in dissipation, in travelling, and, it may be added, in the acquisition of great and various learning. He then entered the service of Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, as secretary. Under the same roof resided Lady Ellesmere's niece, Anne Moore, a lovely and amiable woman. She was about nineteen, and Donne was about thirty, handsome, lively, and polished by travel and study. They met constantly, and the result was a mutual attachment of the most ardent and romantic character. As they were continually together, and always in the presence of watchful relations, ("ambushed around with household spies," as he expresses it,) it could not long

be concealed. "The friends of both parties," says Walton, "used much diligence and many arguments to kill or cool their affections for each other, but in vain;" and the lady's father, Sir George Moore, "knowing prevention to be the best part of wisdom," came up to town in all haste, and carried off his daughter into the country. But his preventive wisdom came too late; the lovers had been secretly married three weeks before.

This precipitate step was perhaps excusable, from the known violence and sternness of Sir George's character. His daughter was well aware that his consent would never be voluntary; she preferred marrying without it, to marrying against it; and trusted to obtain his forgiveness when there was no remedy;—a common mode of reasoning, I believe, in such cases. Never perhaps was a youthful error of this description more bitterly punished —more deeply expiated—and so little repented of!

The earl of Northumberland undertook to break the matter to Sir George, to reason with him on the subject; and to represent the excellent qualities of his son-in-law, and the duty of forgiveness, as a wise man, a father, and Christian. His intention was benevolent, and we have reason to regret that his speech or letter has not been preserved; for (such is human inconsistency!) this very Earl of Northumberland never could forgive his own daughter a similar disobedience,* but followed it with

* Lady Lucy Percy, afterwards the famous Countess of Carlisle, mentioned in page 285.

his curse, which he was with difficulty prevailed on to retract. His mediation failed: Sir George, on learning that his precautions came too late, burst into a transport of rage, the effect of which resembled insanity. He had sufficient interest in the arbitrary court of James, to procure the imprisonment of Donne and the witnesses of his daughter's marriage; and he insisted that his brother-in-law should dismiss the young man from his office,—his only support. Lord Ellesmere yielded with extreme reluctance, saying, "he parted with such a friend and such a secretary, as were a fitter servant for a King." Donne, in sending this news to his wife, signs his name with the quaint oddity, which was so characteristic of his mind,—*John Donne, Anne Donne,—undone:* and *undone* they truly were. As soon as he was released he claimed his wife; but it was many months before they were allowed to meet.

> Have we for this kept guard, like spy o'er spy?
> Had correspondence whilst the foe stood by?
> Stolen (more to sweeten them) our many blisses
> Of meetings, conference, embracements, kisses?
> Shadow'd with negligence our best respects?
> Varied our language through all dialects
> Of becks, winks, looks; and often under boards,
> Spoke dialogues, with our feet far from our words?
> And after all this passed purgatory,
> Must sad divorce make us the vulgar story? *

At length this unkind father in some degree relented; he suffered his daughter and her husband

* Donne's Poems.

to live together, but he refused to contribute to their support; and they were reduced to the greatest distress. Donne had nothing. "His wife had been curiously and plentifully educated; both their natures generous, accustomed to confer, not to receive courtesies;" and when he looked on her who was to be the partner of his lot, he was filled with such sadness and apprehension as he could never have felt for himself alone.*

In this situation they were invited into the house of a generous kinsman, (Sir Francis Woolley,) who maintained them and their increasing family for several years, "to their mutual content" and undiminished friendship.† Volumes could not say more in praise of both than this singular connection:—to bestow favors, so long continued and of such magnitude, with a grace which made them sit lightly on those who received them, and to preserve, under the weight of such obligation, dignity, independence, and happiness, bespeaks uncommon greatness of spirit and goodness of heart and temper on all sides.

This close and domestic intimacy was dissolved only by the death of Sir Francis, who had previously procured a kind of reconcilement with the father of Mrs. Donne, and an allowance of about eighty pounds a year. They fell again into debt, and into misery; and "doubtless," says old Walton, with a quaint, yet eloquent simplicity, "their mar-

* Walton's Lives.

† Walton's Life of Donne.—Chalmers's Biography.

riage had been attended with a heavy repentance, if God had not blessed them with so mutual and cordial affections, as, in the midst of their sufferings, made their bread of sorrow taste more pleasantly than the banquets of dull and low-spirited* people." We find in some of Donne's letters, the most heart-rending pictures of family distress, mingled with the tenderest touches of devoted affection for his amiable wife. "I write," he says, "from the fireside in my parlor, and in the noise of three gamesome children, and by the side of her, whom, because I have transplanted into a wretched fortune, I must labor to disguise that from her by all such honest devices, as giving her my company and discourse," &c. &c.

And in another letter he describes himself, with all his family sick, his wife stupefied by her own and her children's sufferings, without money to purchase medicine,—"and if God should ease us with burials, I know not how to perform even that; but I flatter myself that I am dying too, for I cannot waste faster than by such griefs.—From my hospital. JOHN DONNE."

This is the language of despair; but love was stronger than despair, and supported this affectionate couple through all their trials. Add to mutual love the spirit of high honor and conscious desert; for in the midst of this sad, and almost sordid misery and penury, Donne, whose talents his contempora-

* i. e. low-minded.

ries acknowledged with admiration, refused to take orders and accept a benefice, from a scruple of conscience, on account of the irregular life he had led in his youthful years.

But in their extremity, Providence raised them up another munificent friend. Sir Robert Drury received the whole family into his house, treated Donne with the most cordial respect and affection, and some time afterwards invited him to accompany him abroad.

Donne had been married to his wife seven years, during which they had suffered every variety of wretchedness, except the greatest of all,—that of being separated. The idea of this first parting was beyond her fortitude; she said, her "divining soul boded her some ill in his absence," and with tears she entreated him not to leave her. Her affectionate husband yielded; but Sir Robert Drury was urgent and would not be refused. Donne represented to his wife all that honor and gratitude required of him; and she, too really tender, and too devoted to be selfish and unreasonable, yielded with "an unwilling willingness;" yet, womanlike, she thought she could not bear a pain she had never tried, and was seized with the romantic idea of following him in the disguise of a page.* In a delicate and amiable woman, and a mother, it could have been but a momentary thought, suggested in the frenzy of anguish. It inspired, however, the

* Chalmers's Biography.

following beautiful dissuasion, which her husband addressed to her.

By our first strange and fatal interview;
By all desires which thereof did ensue;
By our long-striving hopes; by that remorse
Which my words' masculine persuasive force
Begot in thee, and by the memory
Of hurts which spies and rivals threaten'd me,—
I calmly beg: but by thy father's wrath,
By all pains which want and divorcement hath,
I conjure thee;—and all the oaths which I
And thou have sworn to seal joint constancy,
I here unswear, and overswear them thus:
Thou shalt not love by means so dangerous.
Temper, O fair Love! Love's impetuous rage;
Be my true mistress, not my feigned page.
I'll go, and by thy kind leave, leave behind
Thee, only worthy to nurse in my mind
Thirst to come back. O! if thou die before,
My soul from other lands to thee shall soar:
Thy (else almighty) beauty cannot move
Rage from the seas, not thy love teach them love,
Nor tame wild Boreas' harshness: thou hast read
How roughly he in pieces shivered
Fair Orithea, whom he swore he loved.
Fall ill or good, 'tis madness to have proved
Dangers unurg'd: feed on this flattery,
That absent lovers one in th' other be.
Dissemble nothing,—not a boy,—nor change
Thy body's habit nor mind: be not strange
To thyself only: all will spy in thy face
A blushing, womanly, discovering grace.
When I am gone dream me some happiness,
Nor let thy looks our long-hid love confess:
Nor praise nor dispraise me; nor bless nor curse

Openly love's force; nor in bed fright thy nurse
With midnight startings, crying out, Oh! oh!
Nurse, oh! my love is slain! I saw him go
O'er the white Alps alone; I saw him, I,
Assailed, ta'en, fight, stabb'd, bleed, fall, and die!
Augur me better chance, except dread Jove
Think it enough for me to have had thy love.

I would not have the heart of one who could read these lines, and think only of their rugged style, and faults of taste and expression. The superior power of truth and sentiment have immortalized this little poem, and the occasion which gave it birth. The wife and husband parted, and he left with her another little poem, which he calls a "Valediction, forbidding to mourn."

When Donne was at Paris, and still suffering under the grief of this separation, he saw, or fancied he saw, the apparition of his wife pass through the room in which he sat, her hair dishevelled and hanging down upon her shoulders, her face pale and mournful, and carrying in her arms a dead infant. Sir Robert Drury found him a few minutes afterwards in such a state of horror, and his mind so impressed with the reality of this vision, that an express was immediately sent off to England, to inquire after the health of Mrs. Donne. She had been seized, after the departure of her husband, with a premature confinement; had been at the point of death; but was then out of danger, and recovering.

This incident has been related by all Donne's

biographers, by some with infinite solemnity, by others with sneering incredulity. I can speak from experience, of the power of the imagination to impress us with a palpable sense of what is *not*, and cannot be; and it seems to me that, in a man of Donne's ardent, melancholy temperament, brooding day and night on the one sad idea, a high state of nervous excitement is sufficient to account for this impression, without having recourse to supernatural agency, or absolute disbelief.

Donne, after several years of study, was prevailed on to enter holy orders; and about four years afterwards, his amiable wife died in her twelfth confinement.* His grief was so overwhelming, that his old friend Walton thinks it necessary thus to apologize for him: "Nor is it hard to think (being that passions may be both changed and heightened by accidents,) but that the abundant affection which was once betwixt him and her, who had so long been the delight of his eyes and the companion of his youth; her, with whom he had divided so many pleasant sorrows and contented fears, as common people are not capable of, should be changed into a commensurable grief." He roused himself at length to his duties; and preaching his first sermon at St. Clement's Church, in the Strand, where his beloved wife lay buried, he took for his text, Jer. iii. v. 1: "Lo! I am the man that hath seen affliction;" and sent all his congregation home in tears.

* In 1617.

* * * * *

Among Donne's earlier poetry may be distinguished the following little song, which has so much more harmony and elegance than his other pieces, that it is scarcely a fair specimen of his style. It was long popular, and I can remember, when a child, hearing it sung to very beautiful music.

Send home my long stray'd eyes to me,
Which, oh! too long have dwelt on thee!
But if from thee they've learnt such ill,
Such forced fashions
And false passions,
That they be
Made by thee
Fit for no good sight—keep them still!

Send home my harmless heart again,
Which no unworthy thought could stain!
But if it hath been taught by thine
To make jestings
Of protestings,
To forget both
Its word and troth,
Keep it still—'tis none of mine!

Perhaps it may interest some readers to add, that Donne's famous lines, which have been quoted *ad infinitum*,—

The pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
Ye might have almost said her body thought.

were not written on his wife, but on Elizabeth

Drury, the only daughter of his patron and friend, Sir Robert Drury. She was the richest heiress in England, the wealth of her father being considered almost incalculable; and this, added to her singular beauty, and extraordinary talents and acquirements, rendered her so popularly interesting, that she was considered a fit match for Henry, Prince of Wales. She died in her sixteenth year.

Dr. Donne and his wife were maternal ancestors of the poet Cowper.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONJUGAL POETRY, CONTINUED.

HABINGTON'S CASTARA.

One of the most elegant monuments ever raised by genius to conjugal affection, was Habington's Castara.

William Habington, who ranks among the most graceful of our old minor poets, was a gentleman of an ancient Roman Catholic family in Worcestershire, and born in 1605.* On his return from his

* It was the mother of William Habington who addressed to her brother, Lord Mounteagle, that extraordinary letter which led to the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot.—*Nash's History of Worcestershire.*

travels, he saw and loved Lucy Herbert, the daughter of Lord Powis, and granddaughter of the Earl of Northumberland. She was far his superior in birth, being descended, on both sides, from the noblest blood in England; and her haughty relations at first opposed their union. It was, however, merely that degree of opposition, without which the "course of true love would have run *too* smooth." It was just sufficient to pique the ardor of the lover, and prove the worth and constancy of her he loved. The history of their attachment has none of the painful interest which hangs round that of Donne and his wife: it is a picture of pure and peaceful happiness, and of mutual tenderness, on which the imagination dwells with a soft complacency and unalloyed pleasure; with nothing of romance but what was borrowed from the elegant mind and playful fancy, which heightened and embellished the delightful reality.

If Habington had not been born a poet, a tombstone in an obscure country church would have been the only memorial of himself and his Castara. "She it was who animated his imagination with tenderness and elegance, and filled it with images of beauty, purified by her feminine delicacy from all grosser alloy." In return, he may be allowed to exult in the immortality he has given her.

> Thy vows are heard! and thy Castara's name
> Is writ as fair i' the register of fame,
> As the ancient beauties which translated are
> By poets up to heaven—each there a star.

* * * * *

Fix'd in Love's firmament no star shall shine
So nobly fair, so purely chaste as thine!

The collection of poems which Habington dedicated to his Castara, is divided into two parts: those written before his marriage he has entitled "The Mistress," those written subsequently, "The Wife."

He has prefixed to the whole an introduction in prose, written with some quaintness, but more feeling and elegance, in which he claims for himself the honor of being the first *conjugal* poet in our language. To use his own words: "Though I appear to strive against the stream of the best wits in erecting the same altar to chastity and love, I will, for one, adventure to do well without a precedent."

Habington had, however, been anticipated, as we have seen, by some of the Italian poets whom he has imitated: he has a little of the *récherche* and affectation of their school, and is not untinctured by the false taste of his day. He has not great power, nor much pathos; but these defects are redeemed by a delicacy of expression uncommon at that time; by the interest he has thrown round a love as pure as its object, and by the most exquisite touches of fancy, sentiment, and tenderness.

Without expressly naming his wife in his prefatory remarks, he alludes to her very beautifully, and exults, with a modest triumph, in the value of his rich possession.

"How unhappy soever I may be in the elocution, I am sure the theme is worthy enough. * * * Nor was my invention ever sinister from the straight way of chastity; and when love builds upon *that* rock, it may safely contemn the battery of the waves, and the threatenings of the wind. Since time, that makes a mockery of the finest structures, shall itself be ruined before *that* be demolished. Thus was the foundation laid; and though my eye, in its survey, was satisfied even to curiosity, yet did not my search rest there. The alabaster, ivory, porphyry, jet, that lent an admirable beauty to the outward building, entertained me with but half pleasure, since they stood there only to make sport for ruin. But when my soul grew acquainted with the owner of that mansion, I found that oratory was dumb when it began to speak her."

He then describes her wisdom; her wit; her innocence,—"so unvitiated by conversation with the world, that the subtle-witted of her sex would have termed it ignorance;" her modesty "so timorous, it represented a besieged city standing watchfully on her guard: in a word, all those virtues which should restore woman to her primitive state of virtue, fully adorned her." He then prettily apologizes for this indiscreet rhetoric on such a subject. "Such," he says, "I fancied her; for to say she is, or was such, were to play the merchant, and boast too much of the value of the jewel I possess, but have no mind to part with."

He concludes with this just, yet modest apprecia-

tion of himself,—"If not too indulgent to what is mine own, I think even these verses will have that proportion in the world's opinion, that heaven hath allotted me in fortune,—not so high as to be wondered at, nor so low as to be contemned."

In the description of "The MISTRESS," are some little touches inimitably graceful and complimentary. Though couched in general terms, it is of course a portrait of Lucy Herbert, such as she appeared to him in the days of their courtship, and fondly recalled and dwelt upon, when she had been many years a wife and a mother. He represents her "as fair as Nature intended her, helpt, perhaps, to a more pleasing grace by the sweetness of education, not by the slight of art." This discrimination is delicately drawn.—He continues, "she is young; for a woman, past the delicacy of her spring, may well move to virtue by respect, never by beauty to affection. In her carriage, sober, thinking her youth expresseth life enough, without the giddy motion fashion of late hath taken up." —(This was early in the reign of the grave and correct Charles the First. What would Habington have said of the flaunting, fluttering, voluble beauties of Charles the Second's time?)

He extols the melody of her voice, her knowledge of music, and her grace in the dance: above all, he dwells on her retiring modesty, the favorite theme of his praise in prose and verse, which seems to have been the most striking part of her character, and her greatest charm in the eyes of her

lover. He concludes, with the beautiful sentiment I have chosen as a motto to this little book.—"Only she, who hath as great a share in virtue as in beauty, deserves a noble love to serve her, and a true poesie to speak her!"

The poems are all short, generally in the form of *sonnets*, if that name can be properly applied to all poems of fourteen lines, whatever the rhythmical arrangement. The subjects of these, and their quaint expressive titles, form a kind of chronicle of their loves, in which every little incident is commemorated. Thus we have, "To Castara, inquiring why I loved her."—"To Castara, softly singing to herself." "To Castara, leaving him on the approach of night."—

> What should we fear, Castara? the cool air
> That's fallen in love, and wantons in thy hair,
> Will not betray our whispers:—should I steal
> A nectar'd kiss, the wind dares not reveal
> The treasure I possess!

"To Castara, on being debarred her presence," (probably by her father, Lord Powis.)—

> Banish'd from you, I charged the nimble wind,
> My unseen messenger, to speak my mind
> In amorous whispers to you!

"Upon her intended journey into the country."—"Upon Seymors," (a house near Marlow, where Castara resided with her parents, and where, it appears, he was not allowed to visit her.)—"On a

trembling kiss she had granted him on her departure." The commencement of this is beautiful:

> The Arabian wind, whose breathing gently blows
> Purple to the violet, blushes to the rose,
> Did never yield an odor such as this!
> Why are you then so thrifty of a kiss,
> Authorized even by custom? Why doth fear
> So tremble on your lip, my lip being near?

Then we have, "To Castara, on visiting her in the night."—This alludes to a meeting of the lovers, at a time they were debarred from each other's society.

The following are more exquisitely graceful than any thing in Waller, yet much in his style.

TO ROSES IN THE BOSOM OF CASTARA.

> Ye blushing virgins happy are
> In the chaste nunnery of her breast;
> For he'd profane so chaste a fair
> Who e'er should call it Cupid's nest.
>
> Transplanted thus, how bright ye grow!
> How rich a perfume do ye yield!
> In some close garden, cowslips so
> Are sweeter than i' the open field.
>
> In those white cloisters live secure,
> From the rude blasts of wanton breath;
> Each hour more innocent and pure,
> Till ye shall wither into death.
>
> Then that which living gave ye room,
> Your glorious sepulchre shall be;

There needs no marble for a tomb,—
That breast hath marble been to me!

The epistle to Castara's mother, Lady Eleanor Powis, who appears to have looked kindly on their love, contains some very beautiful lines, in which he asserts the disinterestedness of his affection for Castara, rich as she is in fortune, and derived from the blood of Charlemagne.

My love is envious! would Castara were
The daughter of some mountain cottager,
Who, with his toil worn out, could dying leave
Her no more dower than what she did receive
From bounteous Nature; her would I then lead
To the temple, rich in her own wealth; her head
Crowned with her hair's fair treasure; diamonds in
Her brighter eyes; soft ermines in her skin,
Each India in her cheek, &c.

This first part closes with "The description of Castara," which is extended to several stanzas, of unequal merit. The following compose in themselves a sweet picture:

Like the violet, which alone
Prospers in some happy shade,
My Castara lives unknown,
To no looser eye betray'd.
For she's to herself untrue
Who delights i' the public view.
* * *

Such her beauty, as no arts
Have enrich'd with borrow'd grace,

Her high birth no pride imparts,
For she blushes in her place.
Folly boasts a glorious blood—
She is noblest, being good!
* * *

She her throne makes reason climb,
While wild passion captive lie;
And each article of time
Her pure thoughts to heaven fly.
All her vows religious be—
And her love she vows to me!

The second part of these poems, dedicated to Castara as "the WIFE," have not less variety and beauty, though there were, of course, fewer incidents to record. The first Sonnet, "to Castara, now possest of her marriage," beginning "This day is ours," &c., has more fancy and poetry than tenderness. The lines to Lord Powis, the father of Castara, on the same occasion, are more beautiful and earnest, yet rich in fanciful imagery. Lord Powis, it must be remembered, had opposed their union, and had been, with difficulty, induced to give his consent. The following lines refer to this; and Habington asserts the purity and unselfishness of his attachment.

Nor grieve, my Lord, 'tis perfected. Before
Afflicted seas sought refuge on the shore,
From the angry north wind; ere the astonish'd spring
Heard in the air the feathered people sing;
Ere time had motion, or the sun obtained
His province o'er the day—this was ordained.

Nor think in her I courted wealth or blood,
Or more uncertain hopes; for had I stood
On the highest ground of fortune,—the world known
No greatness but what waited on my throne—
And she had only had that face and mind,
I with myself, had th' earth to her resigned.
In virtue there's an empire!
Here I rest,
As all things to my power subdued; to me
There's naught beyond this, the whole world is SHE!

On the anniversary of their wedding-day, he thus addresses her:—

LOVE'S ANNIVERSARY.

Thou art return'd (great light) to that blest hour
In which I first by marriage, (sacred power!)
Joined with Castara hearts; and as the same
Thy lustre is, as then,—so is our flame;
Which had increased, but that by Love's decree,
'Twas such at first, it ne'er could greater be.
But tell me, (glorious lamp,) in thy survey
Of things below thee, what did not decay
By age or weakness? I since that have seen
The rose bud forth and fade, the tree grow green,
And wither wrinkled. Even thyself dost yield
Something to time, and to thy grave fall nigher;
But virtuous love is one sweet endless fire.

"To Castara, on the knowledge of love," is peculiarly elegant; it was, probably, suggested by some speculative topics of conversation, discussed in the literary circle he had drawn around him at Hindlip.*

* The family seat of the Habingtons, in Worcestershire.

Where sleeps the north wind when the south inspires
Life in the Spring, and gathers into quires
The scatter'd nightingales; whose subtle ears
Heard first the harmonious language of the spheres;
Whence hath the stone magnetic force t' allure,
Th' enamor'd iron; from a seed impure,
Or natural, did first the mandrake grow;
What power in the ocean makes it flow;
What strange materials is the azure sky
Compacted of; of what its brightest eye
The ever flaming sun; what people are
In th' unknown worlds; what worlds in every star:—
Let curious fancies at these secrets rove;
Castara, what we know we'll practise—love.

The "Lines on her fainting;" those on "The fear of Death,"—

Why should we fear to melt away in death?
May we but die together! &c.

On her sigh,—

Were but that sigh a penitential breath
That thou art mine, it would blow with it death,
T' inclose me in my marble, where I'd be
Slave to the tyrant worms to set thee free!

His self-congratulation on his own happiness, in his epistle to his uncle, Lord Morley, are all in the same strain of gentle and elegant feeling. The following are among the last addressed to his wife.

Give me a heart, where no impure
Disorder'd passion rage;
Which jealousie doth not obscure,

Nor vanity t' expense engage;
Nor wooed to madness by quaint oathes,
Or the fine rhetorick of cloathes;
Which not the softness of the age
To vice or folly doth decline;
Give me that heart, Castara, for 'tis th ne.

Take thou a heart, where no new look
Provokes new appetite;
With no fresh charm of beauty took,
Or wanton stratagem of wit;
Not idly wandering here and there,
Led by an am'rous eye or ear;
Aiming each beauteous mark to hit;
Which virtue doth to one confine;
Take thou that heart, Castara, for 'tis mine.

It was owing to his affection for his wife, as well as his own retired and studious habits, that Habington lived through the civil wars without taking any active part on either side. It should seem, that, at such a period, no man of a lofty and generous spirit could have avoided joining the party or principles, either of Falkland and Grandison, or of Hampden and Hutchinson. But Habington's family had already suffered, in fortune and in fame by their interference with state matters; and without, in any degree, implicating himself with either party, he passed through those stormy and eventful times,

As one who dreams
Of idleness, in groves Elysian;

and died in the first year of the Protectorate, 1654.

I cannot discover the date of Castara's death; but she died some years before her husband, leaving only one son.

There is one among the poems of the second part of Castara, which I cannot pass without remark; it is the Elegy which Habington addressed to his wife, on the death of her friend, Venetia Digby, the consort of the famous Sir Kenelm Digby. She was the most beautiful woman of her time: even Lord Clarendon steps aside from the gravity of history, to mention "her extraordinary beauty, and as extraordinary fame." Her picture at Windsor is, indeed, more like a vision of ideal loveliness, than any form that ever trod the earth.* She was descended from the Percies and the Stanleys, and was first cousin to Habington's Castara, their mothers being sisters. The magnificent spirit of her enamored husband, surrounded her with the most gorgeous adornments that ever were invented by vanity or luxury: and thus she was, one day, found dead on her couch, her hand supporting her head, in the attitude of one asleep. Habington's description exactly agrees with the picture at Althorpe, painted after her death by Vandyke.

* There are also four pictures of her at Strawberry Hill, and one of her mother, Lady Lucy Percy, exquisitely beautiful. At Gothurst, there is a picture of her, and a bust, which, after her death, her husband placed in his chamber, with this tender and beautiful inscription:

Uxorem amare vivam, voluptas; defunctam, religio.

What's honor but a hatchment? what is here
Of Percy left, or Stanley, names most dear
To virtue?
Or what avails her that she once was led
A glorious bride to valiant Digby's bed?
She, when whatever rare
The either Indies boast, lay richly spread
For her to wear, lay on her pillow *dead!*

There is no piercing the mystery which hangs round the story of this beautiful creature: that a stigma rested on her character, and that she was exculpated from it, whatever it might be, seems proved, by the doves and serpents introduced into several portraits of her; the first, emblematical of her innocence, and the latter, of her triumph over slander: and not less by these lines of Habington. If Venetia Digby had been, as Aubrey and others insinuate, abandoned to profligacy, and a victim to her husband's jealousy, Habington would scarce have considered her noble descent and relationship to his Castara as a matter of pride; or her death as a subject of tender condolence; or the awful manner of it a peculiar blessing of Heaven, and the reward of her virtues.

Come likewise, my Castara, and behold
What blessings ancient prophecy foretold,
Bestow'd on her in death; she past away
So sweetly from the world as if her clay
Lay only down to slumber. Then forbear
To let on her blest ashes fall a tear:
Or if thou'rt too much woman, softly weep,
Lest grief disturb the silence of her sleep!

The author of the introduction to the curious Memoirs of Sir Kenelm Digby, has proved the absolute falsehood of some of Aubrey's assertions, and infers the improbability of others. But these beautiful lines by Habington, seem to have escaped his notice; and they are not slight evidence in Venetia's favor. On the whole, the mystery remains unexplained; a cloud has settled forever on the true story of this extraordinary creature Neither the pen nor the sword of her husband could entirely clear her fame in her own age: he could only terrify slander into silence, and it died away into an indistinct murmur, of which the echo alone has reached our time.—But this is enough:—the echo of an *echo* could whisper into naught a woman's fair name. The idea of a creature so formed in the prodigality of nature; so completely and faultlessly beautiful; so nobly born and allied; so capable (as she showed herself on various occasions) of high generous feeling,* of delicacy,† of fortitude,‡ of tenderness; § depraved by her own vices, or "done to death by slanderous tongues," is equally painful and heart-sickening. The image of the aspic trailing its slime and its venom over the bosom of Cleopatra, is not more abhorrent.

* Memoirs of Sir Kenelm Digby, pp. 211, 224. Introduction, p. 27.

† Memoirs, pp. 205, 213. Introduction, p. 28.

‡ Memoirs, p. 254. § Memoirs, p. 305.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONJUGAL POETRY, CONTINUED.

THE TWO ZAPPI.

We find among the minor poets of Italy, a charming, and I believe a singular instance of a husband and a wife, both highly gifted, devoting their talents to celebrate each other. These were Giambattista Zappi,* the famous Roman advocate, and his wife Faustina, the daughter of Carlo Maratti, the painter.

Zappi, after completing his legal studies at Bologna, came to reside at Rome, where he distinguished himself in his profession, and was one of the founders of the academy of the Arcadii. Faustina Maratti was many years younger than her husband, and extremely beautiful: she was her father's favorite model for his Madonnas, Muses, and Vestal Virgins. From a description of her, in an Epithalamium † on her marriage, it appears that her eyes and hair were jet black, her features regular, and her complexion pale and delicate; a style of beauty which, in its perfection, is almost peculiar to Italy. To the mutual tenderness of

* Born at Imola, 1668; died at Rome, 1719.

† See the Epithalamium on her marriage with Zappi, prefixed to their works.

these married lovers, we owe some of the most elegant among the lighter Italian lyrics. Zappi, in a Sonnet addressed to his wife some time after their union, reminds her, with a tender exultation, of the moment they first met; when she swept by him in all the pride of beauty, careless or unconscious of his admiration,—and he bowed low before her, scarcely daring to lift his eyes on the charms that were destined to bless him; "Who," he says, "would then have whispered me, the day will come when you will smile to remember her disdain, for all this blaze of beauty was created for you alone!" or would have said to her, "Know you who is destined to touch that virgin heart? Even he, whom you now pass by without even a look! Such are the miracles of love!"

La prima volta ch' io m' avenni in quella
Ninfa, che il cor m' accese, e ancor l'accende,
Io dissi, è donna o dea, ninfa si bella?
Giunse dal prato, o pur dal ciel discende?

La fronte inchinò in umil atto, ed ella
La mercè pur d'un sguardo a me non rende;
Qual vagheggiata in cielo, o luna, o stella,
Che segue altera il suo viaggio, e splende.

Chi detto avesse a me, "costei ti sprezza,
Ma un dì ti riderai del suo rigore!
Che nacque sol per te tanta bellezza."

Chi detto avesse ad ella: "Il tuo bel core
Sai chi l'avrà? Costui ch' or non t' apprezza"
Or negate i miracoli d'Amore!

The first Sonnet in Faustina's Canzoniere,

Dolce sollievo delle umane cure,

is an eulogium on her husband, and describes her own confiding tenderness. It is full of grace and sweetness, and feminine feeling:

Soave cortesì a vezzosi accenti,
Virtù, senno, valor d'alma gentile,
Spogliato hanno 'l mio cor d'ogni timore;

Or tu gli affetti miei puri innocenti
Pasci cortese, e non cangiar tuo stile
Dolce sollievo de' miei mali, amore!

Others are of a melancholy character; and one or two allude to the death of an infant son, whom she tenderly laments. But the most finished of all her poems is a Sonnet addressed to a lady whom her husband had formerly loved;* the sentiment of which is truly beautiful and feminine: never was jealousy so amiably, or so delicately expressed. There is something very dramatic and picturesque in the apostrophe which Faustina addresses to her rival, and in the image of the lady "casting down her large bright eyes;" as well as affecting in the abrupt recoil of feeling in the last lines.

* Probably the same he had celebrated under the name of Filli, and who married another. Zappi's Sonnet to this lady "Ardo per Filli," is elaborately elegant; sparkling and pointed as a pyramid of gems.

SONNETTO.

Donna! che tanto almio bel soi piacesti!
Che ancor de' pregi tuoi parla sovente,
Lodando, ora il bel crine, ora il ridente
Tuo labbro, ed ora i saggi detti onesti.

Dimmi, quando le voci a lui volgesti
Tacque egli mai, qual uom che nulla sente?
O le turbate luci alteramente,
(Come a me volge) a te volger vedesti?

De tuoi bei lumi, a le due chiare faci
Io so ch' egli arse un tempo, e so che allora—
Ma tu declini al suol gli occhi vivaci!

Veggo il rossor che le tue guance infiora;
Parla, rispondi! Ah non rispondi! taci
Taci! se mi vuoi dir ch' ei t' ama ancora!

TRANSLATION.

Lady, that once so charm'd my life's fair Sun,*
That of thy beauties still he talketh oft,—
Thy mouth, fair hair, and words discreet and soft.
Speak! when thou look'dst, was he from silence won?
Or, did he turn those sweet and troubled eyes
On thee, and gaze as now on me he gazeth?
(For ah! I know *thy* love was then the prize,
And then he *felt* the grace that still he praiseth.)
But why dost thou those beaming glances turn
Thus downwards? Ah! I see (against thy will)
All o'er thy cheek the crimsoning blushes burn.
Speak out! oh answer me!—yet, no, no,—stay!
Be dumb, be silent, if thou need'st must say
That he who once adored thee, loves thee still.†

* "Il mio bel sol" is a poetical term of endearment, which is not easy to reduce gracefully into English.

† Translated by a friend.

Neither Zappi nor his wife were authors by profession: her poems are few; and all seem to flow from some incident or feeling, which awakened her genius, and caused that "craving of the heart and the fancy to break out into voluntary song, which men call inspiration." She became a member of the Arcadia, under the pastoral name of Aglaura Cidonia; and it is remarkable, that though she survived her husband many years, I cannot find any poem referring to her loss, nor of a subsequent date; neither did she marry again, though in the prime of her life and beauty.

Zappi was a great and celebrated lawyer, and his legal skill raised him to an office of trust, under the Pontificate of Clement XI. In one of his Sonnets, which has great sweetness and picturesque effect, he compares himself to the Venetian Gondolier, who in the calm or the storm pours forth his songs on the Lagune, careless of blame or praise, asking no auditors but the silent seas and the quiet moon, and seeking only to "unburthen his full soul" in lays of love and joy—

Il Gondolier, sebben la notte imbruna,
Remo non posa, e fende il mar spumante;
Lieto cantando a un bel raggio di Luna—
"Intanto Erminia infra l' ombrose piante."

That Zappi could be sublime, is proved by his well-known Sonnet on the Moses of Michel Angelo; but his forte is the graceful and the gay. His Anacreontics, and particularly his little drinking song,

Come farò? Farò così!

are very elegant, and almost equal to Chiabrera. It is difficult to sympathize with English drinking songs, and all the vulgar associations of flowing bowls, taverns, three times three, and the table in a roar. An Italian *Brindisi* transports us at once among flasks and vineyards, guitars and dances, a dinner *al fresco*, a group *à la Stothard*. It is all the difference between the ivy-crowned Bacchus, and the bloated Silenus. "Bumper, Squire Jones," or "Waiter, bring clean glasses," do not *sound* so well as

Damigella
Tutta bella
Versa, versa, il bel vino! &c.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONJUGAL POETRY, CONTINUED.

LORD LYTTELTON.

LORD LYTTELTON has told us in a very sweet line,

How much the *wife* is dearer than the *bride*.

But his Lucy Fortescue deserves more than a mere allusion, *en passant*. That Lord Lyttelton

is still remembered and read as a poet, is solely for her sake: it is she who has made the shades of Hagley classic ground, and hallowed its precincts by the remembrance of the fair and gentle being, the tender woman, wife, and mother, who in the prime of youth and loveliness, melted like a creature of air and light from her husband's arms,

"And left him on this earth disconsolate!"

That the verses she inspired are still popular, is owing to the power of *truth*, which has here given lasting interest to what were otherwise *mediocre*. Lord Lyttelton was not much of a poet; but his love was real; its object was real, beautiful, and good: thus buoyed up, in spite of his own faults and the change of taste, he has survived the rest of the rhyming gentry of his time, who wrote epigrams on fans and shoe-buckles,—songs to the Duchess of *this* and Countess of *that*—and elegies to Miras, Delias, and Chloes.

Lucy Fortescue, daughter of Hugh Fortescue, Esq., of Devonshire, and grand-daughter of Lord Aylmer, was born in 1718. She was about two-and-twenty when Lord Lyttelton first became attached to her, and he was in his thirty-first year: in person and character, she realized all he had imagined in his "Advice to Belinda."

"Without, all beauty—and all peace within.
* * * * *
Blest is the maid, and worthy to be blest,
Whose soul, entire by him she loves possest,

Feels every vanity in fondness lost,
And asks no power, but that of pleasing most:
Hers is the bliss, in just return to prove
The honest warmth of undissembled love;
For her, inconstant man might cease to range,
And gratitude forbid desire to change."

To the more peculiar attributes of her sex,—beauty and tenderness,—she united all the advantages of manner,—

Polite as she in courts had ever been;

and wit,—the only wit that becomes a woman,—

That temperately bright
With inoffensive light
All pleasing shone, nor ever past
The decent bounds that wisdom's sober hand
And sweet benevolence's mild command,
And bashful modesty before it cast.

Her education was uncommon for the time; for *then*, a woman, who to youth and elegance and beauty, united a familiar acquaintance with the literature of her own country, French, Italian, and the classics, was distinguished among her sex. She had many suitors, and her choice was equally to her own honor and that of her lover. Lord Lyttelton was not rich; his father, Sir Thomas Lyttelton, being still alive. He had, perhaps, never dreamed of the coronet which late in life descended on his brow: and far from possessing a captivating exterior, he was extremely plain in person, "of a

feeble, ill-compacted figure, and a meagre sallow countenance." * But talents, elegance of mind, and devoted affection, had the influence they ought to have, and generally do possess, in the mind of a woman. We are told that our sex's "earliest, latest care,—our heart's supreme ambition," is "to be fair." Even Madame de Staël would have given half her talents for half Madame Recamier's beauty! and why? because the passion of our sex is to please and to be loved; and men have taught us, that in nine cases out of ten we are valued merely for our personal advantages: they can scarce believe that women, generally speaking, are so indifferent to the mere exterior of a man,—that it has so little power to interest their vanity or affections. Let there be something for their hearts to honor, and their weakness to repose on, and feeling and imagination supply the rest. In this respect, the "gentle lady married to the Moor," who saw her lover's visage in his mind, is the type of our sex;—the instances are without number. The Frenchman triumphs a little too much *en petit maitre*, who sings,

> Grands Dieux, combien elle est jolie!
> Et moi, je suis, je suis si laid!

He might have spared his exultation: if he had sense, and spirit, and tenderness, he had all that is necessary to please a woman, who is worthy to be pleased.

* Johnson's Life of Lord Lyttelton.

Personal vanity in a woman, however misdirected, arises from the idea, that our power with those we wish to charm, is founded on beauty as a female attribute; it is never indulged but with a reference to another—it is a *means*, not an *end*. Personal vanity in a man is sheer unmingled egotism, and an unfailing subject of ridicule and contempt with all women—be they wise or foolish.

To return from this long *tirade* to Lucy Fortescue.—After the usual fears and hopes, the impatience and anxious suspense of a long courtship,* Lord Lyttelton won his Lucy, and thought himself blest—and was so. Five revolving years of happiness seemed pledges of its continuance, and "the wheels of pleasure moved without the aid of hope:" it was at the conclusion of the fifth year, he wrote the lines on the anniversary of his marriage, in which he exults in his felicity, and in the possession of a treasure, which even then, though he knew it not, was fading in his arms.

> Whence then this strange increase of joy?
> He, only he can tell, who, matched like me,
> (If such another happy man there be,)
> Has by his own experience tried
> How much the *wife* is dearer than the *bride!*

Six months afterwards, his Lucy was seized with

* See in his Poems,—the lines beginning

> On Thames's banks a gentle youth
> For Lucy sighed with matchless truth,

Your shape, your lips, your eyes are still the same.

the illness of which she died in her twenty-ninth year, leaving three infants, the eldest not four years old.* As there are people who strangely unite, as inseparable, the ideas of fiction and rhyme, and doubt the sincerity of her husband's grief, because he wrote a monody on her memory, he shall speak for himself in prose. The following is an extract from his letter to his father, written two days before her death.

"I believe God supports me above my own strength, for the sake of my friends who are concerned for me, and in return for the resignation with which I endeavor to submit to his will. If it please Him, in his infinite mercy, to restore my dear wife to me, I shall most thankfully acknowledge his goodness; if not, I shall most humbly endure his chastisement, which I have too much deserved. These are the sentiments with which my mind is replete; but as it is still a most bitter cup, how my body will bear it, if it must not pass from me, it is impossible for me to foretell; but I hope the best.—Jan. 17th, 1742."

I imagine Dr. Johnson meant a sneer at Lord Lyttelton, when he says laconically,—"his wife died, and he *solaced* himself by writing a long monody on her memory."—In these days we might naturally

* Her son was that eccentric and profligate Lord Lyttelton whose supernatural death-bed horrors have been the subject of so much speculation. He left no children.

The present Earl of Mountnorris, (so distinguished for his Oriental travels when Lord Valentia,) is the grandson of Lucy Fortescue.

exclaim against a widowed husband who should *solace* himself by apostrophes to the Muses and Graces, and bring in the whole Aonian choir,—Pindus and Castalia, Aganippe's fount, and Thespian vales; the Clitumnus and the Illissus, and such Pagan and classical embroidery.—What should we have thought of Lord Byron's famous "Fare thee well," if conceived in this style?—but such was the poetical vocabulary of Lord Lyttelton's day: and that he had not sufficient genius and originality to rise above it is no argument against the sincerity of his grief. Petrarch and his Laura (*apropos* to all that has ever been sung or said of love for five hundred years) are called in a very commonplace strain, from their "Elysian bowers;" and then follow some lines of real and touching beauty, because they owe nothing to art or effort, but are the immediate result of truth and feeling. He is still apostrophizing Petrarch.

What were, alas! thy woes compar'd to mine?
To thee thy mistress in the blissful band
Of Hymen never gave her hand;
The joys of wedded love were never thine!
In thy domestic care
She never bore a share;
Nor with endearing art
Would heal thy wounded heart
Of every secret grief that fester'd there:
Nor did her fond affection on the bed
Of sickness watch thee, and thy languid head
Whole nights on her unwearied arm sustain,
And charm away the sense of pain:

Nor did she crown your mutual flame
With pledges dear, and with a father's tender name.

* * * * *

How in the world, to me a desert grown,
Abandon'd and alone,
Without my sweet companion can I live?
Without her lovely smile,
The dear reward of every virtuous toil,
What pleasures now can pall'd Ambition give?

One would wish to think that Lord Lyttelton was faithful to the memory of his Lucy: but he was neither more nor less than man; and in the impatience of grief, or unable to live without that domestic happiness to which his charming wife had accustomed him, he married again, about two years after her death, and too precipitately. His second choice was Elizabeth Rich, eldest daughter of Sir Robert Rich. Perhaps he expected too much; and how few women could have replaced Lucy Fortescue! The experiment proved a most unfortunate one, and added bitterness to his regrets. He devoted the rest of his life to politics and literature.

About ten years after his second marriage, Lord Lyttelton made a tour into Wales with a gay party. On some occasion, while they stood contemplating a scene of uncommon picturesque beauty, he turned to a friend, and asked him, with enthusiasm, whether it was possible to behold a more pleasing sight? Yes, answered the other—the countenance of the woman one loves! Lord Lyttelton shrunk, as it

probed to the quick; and after a moment's silence, replied pensively—"*Once*, I thought so!" *

Lord Lyttelton brings to mind his friend and patron, Frederick, Prince of Wales, (grandfather of the present King.) From the impression which *history* has given of his character, no one, I believe, would suspect him of being a poet, though he was known as the patron of poets. He sometimes amused himself with writing French and English songs, &c., in imitation of the Regent Duc d'Orleans. But, assuredly, it was not in imitation of the Regent he chose his own wife for the principal subject of his ditties. In the same manner, and in the same worthy spirit of imitation of the same worthy person, he tried hard to be a libertine, and laid siege to the virtue of sundry maids of honor; perferring all the time, in his inmost soul, his own wife to the handsomest among her attendants. His flirtations with Lady Archibald Hamilton and Miss Vane had not half the grace or sincerity of some of his effusions to the Princess, whom he tenderly loved, and used to call, with a sort of pastoral gallantry, "ma Sylvie." One of his songs has been preserved by that delicious retailer of court-gossip, Horace Walpole; and I copy it from the Appendix to his Memoirs, without agreeing in his flippant censure.

SONG.

'Tis not the languid brightness of thine eyes,
That swim with pleasure and delight,

* Lord Lyttelton's Works, 4to.

Nor those fair heavenly arches which arise
O'er each of them, to shade their light:—
'Tis not that hair which plays with every wind,
And loves to wanton o'er thy face,
Now straying o'er thy forehead, now behind
Retiring with insidious grace:—
'Tis not the living colors over each,
By nature's finest pencil wrought,
To shame the fresh-blown rose and blooming peach,
And mock the happiest painter's thought;
But 'tis that gentle mind, that ardent love
So kindly answering my desire,—
That grace with which you look, and speak, and move!
That thus have set my soul on fire.

To Dr. Parnell's* love for his wife, (Anne Minchin,) we owe two of the most charming songs in our language; "My life hath been so wondrous free," and that most beautiful lyric, "When your beauty appears," which, as it is less known, I give entire.

When your beauty appears
In its graces and airs,
All bright as an angel new dropt from the skies,
At distance I gaze, and am aw'd by my fears,
So strangely you dazzle my eyes.
But when without art,
Your kind thoughts you impart,
When your love runs in blushes through every vein;
When it darts from your eyes, when it pants at your [heart
Then I know that you're woman again.

"There's a passion and pride
In our sex," she replied;

* Born in Dublin, 1679; died 1717.

"And thus, might I gratify both, I would do,—
Still an angel appear to each lover beside,
But still be a woman for you!"

This amiable and beloved wife died after a union of five or six years, and left her husband broken-hearted. Her sweetness and loveliness, and the general sympathy caused by her death, drew a touch of deep feeling from the pen of Swift, who mentions the event in his journal to Stella: "every one," he says, "grieved for her husband, they were so happy together." Poor Parnell did not, in his bereavement, try Lord Lyttelton's specifics: he did not write an elegy, nor a monody, nor did he marry again;—and, unfortunately for himself, he could not subdue his mind to religious resignation. His grief and his nervous irritability proved too much for his reason; he felt, what all have felt under the influence of piercing anguish,—a dread, a horror of being left alone: he flew to society; when that was not at hand, he sought relief from excess which his constitution would not bear, and died, unhappy man! in the prime of life; "a martyr," as Goldsmith tells us, "to conjugal fidelity."

CHAPTER XXX.

CONJUGAL POETRY, CONTINUED.

KLOPSTOCK AND META.

THEN is there not the German Klopstock and his Meta,—his lovely, devoted, angelic Meta? As the subject of some of her husband's most delightful and popular poems, both before and after her marriage,—when living, she formed his happiness on earth; and when, as he tenderly imagined, she watched over his happiness from heaven—how pass her lightly over in a work like this? Yet how do her justice, but by borrowing her own sweet words? or referring the reader at once to the memoirs and fragments of her letters, which never saw the light till sixty years after her death?—for in her there was no vain-glory, no effort, no display. A feeling so hallowed lingers round the memory of this angelic creature, that it is rather a subject to blend with our most sacred and most serious thoughts,—to muse over in hours when the heart communes with itself and is still, than to dress out in words, and mingle with the ideas of earthly fame and happiness. Other loves might be poetical, but the love of Klopstock and his Meta was in itself *poetry*. They were mutually possessed with the idea, that they had been predestined to each other

from the beginning of time, and that their meeting on earth was merely a kind of incidental prelude to an eternal and indivisible union in heaven: and shall we blame their fond faith?

> It is a gentle and affectionate thought,
> That in immeasurable heights above us,
> Even at our birth, the wreath of love was woven
> With sparkling stars for flowers! *

All the sweetest images that ever were grouped together by fancy, dreaming over the golden age; beauty, innocence, and happiness; the fervor of youthful love, the rapture of corresponding affection; undoubting faith and undissembled truth;—these were so bound together, so exalted by the highest and holiest associations, so confirmed in the serenity of conscious virtue, so sanctified by religious enthusiasm; and in the midst of all human blessedness, so wrapt up in futurity,—that the grave was not the close but the completion and the consummation of their happiness. The garland which poesy has suspended on the grave of Meta, was wreathed by no fabled muse; it is not of laurel, "meed of conqueror and sage;" nor of roses blooming and withering among their thorns; nor of myrtle shrinking and dying away before the blast: but of flowers gathered in Paradise, pure and bright, and breathing of their native Eden: which never caught one blighting stain of earth, and though dewed with tears,—"tears such as angels shed!"

* Coleridge's Wallenstein.

* * * * *

The name of Klopstock forms an epoch in the history of poetry. Goëthe, Schiller, and Wieland have since adorned German literature; but Klopstock was the first to impress on the poetry of his country the stamp of nationality. He was a man of great and original genius,—gifted with an extraordinary degree of sensibility and imagination; but these being united to the most enthusiastic religious feeling, elevated and never misled him. His life was devoted to the three noblest sentiments that can fill and animate the human soul,—religion, patriotism, and love. To these, from early youth, he devoted his faculties and consecrated his talents. He had, even in his boyhood, resolved to write a poem, "which should do honor to God, his country, and himself;" and he produced the Messiah. It would be difficult to describe the enthusiasm this work excited when the first three cantos appeared in 1746. "If poetry had its saints," says Madame de Staël, "then Klopstock would be at the head of the calendar;" and she adds, with a burst of her own eloquence, "Ah, qu'il est beau le talent, quand on ne l'a jamais profané! quand il n'a servi qu'à révéler aux hommes, sous la forme attrayante des beaux arts, les sentiments généreux, et les espérances religieuses obscurcies au fond de leur cœur!"

Such was Klopstock as a poet. As a man, he is described as one of the most amiable and affectionate of human beings;—"good in all the foldings of

his heart," as his sweet wife expressed it; free from all petty vanity, egotism, and worldly ambition. He was pleasing, though not handsome in person, with fine blue animated eyes.* The tone of his voice was at first low and hesitating, but soft and persuasive; and he always ended by captivating the entire attention of those he addressed. He was, to his latest moments, fond of the society of women, and an object of their peculiar tenderness and veneration.

Klopstock's first serious attachment was to his cousin, the beautiful Fanny Schmidt, the sister of his intimate friend and brother poet, Schmidt. He loved her constantly for several years. His correspondence with Bodmer gives us an interesting picture of a fine mind struggling with native timidity, and of the absolute terror with which this gentle and beautiful girl could inspire him, till his heart seemed to wither and sicken within him from her supposed indifference. The uncertainty of his future prospects, and his sublime idea of the merits and beauties of her he loved, kept him silent; nor did he ever venture to declare his passion, except in the beautiful odes and songs which she inspired. Speak-

* Bodmer, after the publication of the Messiah, invited the author to his house in Switzerland. He had imaged to himself a most sublime idea of the man who could write such a poem, and had fancied him like one of the sages and prophets of the Old Testament. His astonishment, when he saw a slight made, elegant looking young man leap gayly from his carriage, with sparkling eyes and a smiling countenance, has been pleasantly described.

ing of one of those to his friend Bodmer, he says, "She who could best reward it, has not seen it; so timid does her apparent insensibility make me."

Whether this insensibility was more than apparent is not perfectly clear: the memoirs of Klopstock are not quite accurate or satisfactory in this part of his history. It should seem from the published correspondence, that his love was distinctly avowed, though he never had courage to make a direct offer of himself. Fanny Schmidt appears to have been a superior woman in point of mind, and full of admiration for his genius. She writes to him in terms of friendship and kindness, but she leaves him, after three years' attachment on his part, still in doubt whether her heart remain untouched,—and even whether she *had* a heart to be touched. He intimates, but with a tender and guarded delicacy, that he had reason to complain of her coquetry;* and, with the sensibility of a proud but wounded heart, he was anxious to prove to himself that his romantic tenderness had not been unworthily bestowed. "All the peace and consolation of my after life depends on knowing whether Fanny *really* has a heart?—a heart that *could* have sympathized with mine?"† He had commissioned his friend Gleim to plead his cause, to sound her heart in its inmost depths; and in return, received the intelligence of her approaching union with another. "When (as he expresses

* Klopstock's Letters, p. 145. † Klopstock's Letters.

it) not a hope was left to be destroyed," he became calm; but he suffered at first acutely; and this ill-fated attachment tinged with a deep gloom nearly four years of his life. While in suspense, he continually repeats his conviction that he can never love again. "Had I never seen her, I might have attached myself to another object, and perhaps have known the felicity of mutual love! But now it is impossible; my heart is steeled to every impression." The sentiment was natural; but, fortunately for himself, he was deceived.

In passing through Hamburg, in April, 1751, and while he was still under the influence of this heart-wearing attachment to Fanny, he was introduced to Meta Möller. The impression she made on him is thus described, in a letter to his friend and confidant, Gleim.

"You may perhaps have heard Gisecke mention Margaret Möller of Hamburg. I was lately introduced to this girl, and passed in her society most of the time I lately spent at Hamburg. I found her, in every sense of the word, so lovely, so amiable, so full of attractions, that I could at times scarcely forbear to give her the name which is to me the dearest in existence. I was often with her alone; and in those moments of unreserved intercourse, was insensibly led to communicate my melancholy story. Could you have seen her in those moments, my Gleim! how she looked and listened, —and how often she interrupted me, and how tenderly she wept! and if you knew how much she is

my friend; and yet it was not for *her* that I had so long suffered. What a heart must she possess to be thus touched for a stranger! At this thought I am almost tempted to make a comparison; but then does a mist gather before mine eyes, and if I probe my heart, I feel that I am more unhappy than ever." Again he writes from Copenhagen, "I have re-read the little Möller's letters; sweet artless creature she is! She has already written to me four times, and writes in a style so exquisitely natural! Were you to see this lovely girl, and read her letters, you would scarce conceive it possible that she should be mistress of the French, English, and Italian languages, and even conversant with Greek and Italian literature." But it were wronging both, to give the history and result of this attachment to Meta in any language but her own. Since the publication of Richardson's correspondence, the letters addressed to him, in English, by Meta Klopstock, have become generally known; but this account would be incomplete were they wholly omitted; and those who have read them before, will not be displeased at the opportunity of re-perusing them: her sweet lisping English is worth volumes of eloquence.

"You will know all what concerns me. Love, dear Sir, is all what me concerns, and love shall be all what I will tell you in this letter. In one happy night I read my husband's poem—the Messiah. I was extremely touched with it. The next day I asked one of his friends who was the author of this

poem? and this was the first time I heard Klopstock's name. I believe I fell immediately in love with him; at the least, my thoughts were ever with him filled, especially because his friend told me very much of his character. But I had no hopes ever to see him, when quite unexpectedly I heard that he should pass through Hamburg. I wrote immediately to the same friend, for procuring by his means that I might see the author of the Messiah, when in Hamburg. He told him that a certain girl in Hamburg wished to see him, and, for all recommendation, showed him some letters in which I made bold to criticize Klopstock's verses. Klopstock came, and came to me. I must confess, that, though greatly prepossessed of his qualities, I never thought him the amiable youth that I found him. This made its effect. After having seen him two hours, I was obliged to pass the evening in company, which never had been so wearisome to me. I could not speak; I could not play; I thought I saw nothing but Klopstock. I saw him the next day, and the following, and we were very seriously friends; on the fourth day he departed. It was a strong hour, the hour of his departure. He wrote soon after, and from that time our correspondence began to be a very diligent one. I sincerely believed my love to be friendship. I spoke with my friends of nothing but Klopstock, and showed his letters. They rallied me, and said I was in love. rallied them again, and said they must have a very friendshipless heart, if they had no idea of

friendship to a man as well as a woman. Thus it continued eight months, in which time my friends found as much love in Klopstock's letters as in me. I perceived it likewise, but I would not believe it. At the last, Klopstock said plainly that he loved; and I startled as for a wrong thing. I answered that it was no love, but friendship, as it was what I felt for him; we had not seen one another enough to love; as if love must have more time than friendship! This was sincerely my meaning; and I had this meaning till Klopstock came again to Hamburg. This he did a year after we had seen one another the first time. We saw, we were friends; we loved, and we believed that we loved; and a short time after I could even tell Klopstock that I loved. But we were obliged to part again, and wait two years for our wedding. My mother would not let me marry a stranger. I could marry without her consentment, as, by the death of my father, my fortune depended not on her; but this was an horrible idea for me; and thank Heaven that I have prevailed by prayers! At this time, knowing Klopstock, she loves him as her son, and thanks God that she has not persisted. We married, and I am the happiest wife in the world. In some few months it will be four years that I am so happy; and still I dote upon Klopstock as if he was my bridegroom. If you knew my husband, you would not wonder. If you knew his poem, I could describe him very briefly, in saying he is in all respects what he is as a poet. This

I can say with all wifely modesty ; I am all raptures when I do it. And as happy as I am in love, so happy am I in friendship ;—in my mother, two elder sisters, and five other women. How rich I am ! Sir, you have willed that I should speak of myself, but I fear that I have done it too much. Yet you see how it interests me."

I have somewhere seen or heard it observed, that there is nothing in the Romeo and Juliet more finely imagined or more true to nature than Romeo's previous love for another. It is while writhing under the coldness and scorn of his proud inaccessible Rosaline, she who had "forsworn to love," that he meets the soft glances of Juliet, whose eyes "do comfort, and not burn ;" and he takes refuge in her bosom, for she

> Doth grace for grace, and love for love allow;
> The other did not so.

With such a grateful and gratified feeling must Klopstock have gathered to his arms the devoted Meta, who came, with healing on her lips, to suck forth the venom of a recent wound. He has himself beautifully expressed this in one of the poems addressed to her, and which he has entitled the Recantation. He describes the anguish he had suffered from an unrequited affection, and the day-spring of renovated hope and rapture which now dawned in his heart;

> At length, beyond my hope the night retires,
> 'Tis past, and all my long lost joys awake,

Smiling they wake, my long forgotten joys,
O, how I wonder at my altered fate! &c.

and exults in the charms and tenderness of her who had wiped away his tears, and whom he had first "taught to love."

I taught thee first to love, and seeking thee,
I learned what true love was; it raised my heart
From earth to heaven, and now, through Eden's groves,
With thee it leads me on in endless joy.

This little poem has been translated by Elizabeth Smith, with one or two of the graceful little songs addressed to Meta, under the name of *Cidli*. This is the appellation given to Jarius's daughter in the "Messiah;" and Meta, who was fond of the character, probably chose it for herself. The first cantos of this poem had been published long before his marriage, and it was continued after his union with Meta, and at her side. Nothing can be more charming than the picture of domestic affection and happiness contained in the following passage of one of her letters to Richardson:—apparently, she had improved in English, since the last was written.—"It will be a delightful occupation for me to make you more acquainted with my husband's poem. Nobody can do it better than I, being the person who knows the most of that which is not published; being always present at the birth of the young verses, which begin by fragments here and there, of a subject of which his soul is

just then filled. He has many great fragments of the whole work ready. You may think that persons who love as we do, have no need of two chambers ; we are always in the same: I, with my little work,—still—still—only regarding sometimes my husband's sweet face, which is so venerable at that time, with tears of devotion, and all the sublimity of the subject. My husband reading me his young verses, and suffering my criticisms."

And for the task of criticism, Meta was peculiarly fitted, not less by her fine cultivated mind and feminine delicacy of taste, than by her affectionate enthusiasm for her husband's glory. "How much," says Klopstock, writing after her death, "how much do I lose in her even in this respect! How perfect was her taste, how exquisitely fine her feelings! she observed every thing, even to the slightest turn of the thought. I had only to look at her, and could see in her face when a syllable pleased or displeased her: and when I led her to explain the reason of her remarks, no demonstration could be more true, more accurate, or more appropriate to the subject. But in general this gave us very little trouble, for we understood each other when we had scarcely begun to explain our ideas."

And that not a stain of the selfish or earthly should rest on the bright purity of her mind and heart, it must be remarked that we cannot trace in all her letters, whether before or after marriage, the slightest feeling of jealousy or doubt, though

the woman lived whom Klopstock had once exalted into a divinity, and though she loved her husband with the most impassioned enthusiasm. She expresses frankly her admiration of the odes and songs addressed to Fanny: and her only sentiment seems to be a mixture of grief and astonishment, that any woman could be so insensible as not to love Klopstock, or so cruel as to give him pain.

Though in her letters to Richardson she speaks with rapture of her hopes of becoming a mother, as all that was wanting to complete her happiness,* she had long prepared herself for a fatal determination to those hopes. Her constant presentiment of approaching death, she concealed, in tenderness to her husband. When we consider the fond and entire confidence which existed between them, this must have cost no small effort of fortitude: "She was formed," said Klopstock, "to say, like Arria, 'My Pætus,' 'tis not painful:" but her husband pressed her not to allow any secret feeling to prey on her mind: and then, with gratitude for his "permission to speak," she avowed her apprehensions, and at the same time her strong and animated trust in religion. This whole letter, to

* "I not being able to travel yet, my husband has been obliged to make a voyage to Copenhagen. He is yet absent; a cloud over my happiness! He will soon return; but what does that help? he is yet equally absent. We write to each other every post; but what are letters to presence? But I will speak no more of this little cloud, I will only tell my happiness. But I cannot tell you how I rejoice!—A son of my dear Klopstock's! O, when shall I have him?"—*Memoirs*, p. 99.

which I must refer the reader, (for any attempt I should make to copy it entire, would certainly be unintelligible,) is one of the most beautiful pieces of tender eloquence that ever fell from a woman's pen ; and that is saying much. She is writing to her husband during a short absence. "I well know," she says, "that all hours are not alike, and particularly the last, since death in my situation, must be far from an easy death; but let the last hour make no impression on you. You know too well how much the body then presses down the soul. Let God give what he will, I shall still be happy. A longer life with you, or eternal life with Him! But can you as easily part from me as I from you? You are to remain in this world, in a world without *me!* You know I have always wished to be the survivor, because I well know it is the hardest to endure; but perhaps it is the will of God that you should be left; and perhaps you have most strength."

This last letter is dated September 10th, 1754. Her confinement took place in November following; and after the most cruel and protracted sufferings, it became too certain that both must perish,—mother and child.

Klopstock stood beside her, and endeavored, as well as the agony of his feelings would permit, to pray with her and to support her. He praised her fortitude:—"You have endured like an angel! God has been with you! he *will* be with you! were I so wretched as not to be a Christian, I

should now become one." He added with strong emotion, "Be my guardian angel, if God permit!" She replied tenderly, "You have ever been mine!" He repeated his request more fervently: she answered with a look of undying love, "Who would not be so!" He hastened from the room, unable to endure more. After he was gone, her sister,* who attended her through her sufferings, said to her, "God will help you!"—"Yes, to heaven!" replied the saint. After a faint struggle, she added, "It is over!" her head sunk on the pillow, and while her eyes, until glazed by death, were fixed tenderly on her sister,—thus with the faith of a Christian, and the courage of a martyr, she resigned into the hands of her Creator, a life which had been so blameless and so blessed, so intimate with love and joy, that only such a death could crown it, by proving what an angel a woman *can* be, in doing, feeling, and suffering.†

* * * * *

It was by many expected that Klopstock would have made the loss of his Meta the subject of a poem; but he early declared his resolution not to do this, nor to add to the collection of odes and songs formerly addressed to her. He gives his

* Elizabeth Schmidt, married to the brother of Fanny Schmidt.

† Meta was buried with her infant in her arms, at Ottenson, near Altona. She had expressed a wish to have two passages from the Messiah, descriptive of the resurrection, inscribed on her coffin, but only one was engraved—

"Seed sown by God to ripen for the harvest."

See Memoirs, p. 197.

reasons for this silence. "I think that before the public a man should speak of his wife with the same modesty as of himself; and this principle would destroy the enthusiasm required in poetry. The reader too, not without reason, would feel himself justified in refusing implicit credit to the fond eulogium written on one beloved; and my love for her who made me the happiest among men, is too sincere to let me allow my readers to call it in question." Yet in a little poem * addressed afterwards to his friend Schmidt, and probably not intended for publication, he alludes to his loss, in a tone of deep feeling, and complains of the recollections which distract his sleepless nights.

> Again the form of my lost wife I see,
> She lies before me, and she dies again;
> Again she smiles on me, again she dies,
> Her eyes now close, and comfort me no more.

He indulged the fond thought that she hovered, a guardian spirit, near him still,—

> O, if thou love me yet, by heavenly laws
> Condemn me not! I am a man, and mourn,—
> Support me, though unseen!

And he foretells that, even in distant ages,—"in times perhaps more virtuous than ours," his grief would be remembered, and the name of his Meta

* Translated by Elizabeth Smith, of whom it has been truly said, that she resembled Meta, and to whom we are indebted for her first introduction to English readers.

revered. And shall it not be so?—it must—it will:—as long as truth, virtue, tenderness, dwell in woman's breast—so long shall Meta be dear to her sex; for she has honored us among men on earth, and among saints in heaven!

And now, how shall I fill up this sketch? Let us pause for a moment, and suppose the fate of Meta and Klopstock reversed, and that *she* had been called, according to her own tender and unselfish wish, to be the survivor. Under such a terrible dispensation, her angelic meekness and sublime faith would at first have supported her; she would have rejoiced in the *certainty* of her husband's blessedness, and in the yearning of her heart she would have tried to fancy him ever present with her in spirit; she would have collected together his works, and have occupied herself in transmitting his glory as a poet, without a blemish, to the admiration of posterity; she would have gone about all her feminine duties with a quiet patience—for it would have been *his* will; and would have smiled—and her smile would have been like the moonlight on a winter lake: and with all her thoughts loosened from the earth, to her there would never more have been good or evil, or grief, or fear, or joy: space and time would only have existed to her, as they separated her from *him*. Thus she would have lived on dyingly from day to day, and then have perished, less through regret, than through the intense longing to realize the vision of her heart, and rejoin him

without whom all concerns of life were vain, and less than nothing. And this, I am well convinced, —as far as one human being may dare to reason on the probable result of certain feelings and impulses in another,—would have been the lot of Meta if left on the earth alone and desolate.

If Klopstock acted differently, let him not be too severely arraigned; he was but a man, and differently constituted. With great sensibility, he possessed, by nature, an elasticity of spirit which could rebound, as it were, from the very depths of grief: his sorrow, intense at first, found many outward resources:—he could speak, he could write; his vivacity of imagination pictured to him Meta happy; and his habitual religious feeling made him acquiesce in his own privation; he could please himself with visiting her grave, and every year he planted it with white lilies, "because the lily was the most exalted among flowers, and she was the most exalted among women."* He had many friends, to whom the confiding simplicity of his character had endeared him: all his life he seems to have clung to friendship as a child clings to the breast of the mother; he was accustomed to seek and find relief in sympathy,—and sympathy, deeply felt and strongly expressed, was all around him. With his high intellect and profound feeling, there was ever a childlike buoyancy in the mind of Klopstock, which gained him the title of *der ewigen jungling*—"The ever young, or the youth

* Memoirs.

forever."* His mind never fell into "the sear and yellow leaf," it was a perpetual spring: the flowers grew and withered, and blossomed again,—a never-failing succession of fragrance and beauty: when the rose wounded him, he gathered the lily; when the lily died on his bosom, he cherished the myrtle. And he was most happy in such a character, for in him it was allied to the highest virtue and genius, and equally remote from weakness and selfishness.

About four years after the death of Meta, he became extremely attached to a young girl of Blackenburg, whose name was Dona; she loved and admired him in return, but naturally felt some distrust in the warmth of his attachment; and he addressed to her a little poem, in which, tenderly alluding to Meta, he assures Dona that *she* is not less dear to him or *less* necessary to his happiness †—

And such is *man's* fidelity!

This intended marriage never took place.

Twenty-five years afterwards, when Klopstock was in his sixtieth year, he married Johanna von Wentham, a near relation of his Meta; an excellent and amiable woman, whose affectionate attention cheered the remaining years of his life.

* Klopstock says of himself, "it is not my nature to be happy or miserable by halves; having once discarded melancholy, I am ready to welcome happiness."—*Klopstock and his Friends*, p. 164.

† Du zweifelst dass ich dich wie Meta liebe?
Wie Meta lieb' Ich Done dich!
Dies, saget dir mein hertz liebe vol
Mein ganzes hertz! &c

Klopstock died at Hamburg in 1813, at the age of eighty: his remains were attended to the grave by all the magistrates, the diplomatic corps, the clergy, foreign generals, and a concourse of about fifty thousand persons. His sacred poems were placed on his coffin, and in the intervals of the chanting, the ministering clergyman took up the book, and read aloud the fine passage in the Messiah, describing the death of the righteous.—Happy are they who have so consecrated their genius to the honor of Him who bestowed it, that the productions of their early youth may be placed without profanation on their tomb!

He was buried under a lime-tree in the churchyard of Ottensen, by the side of his Meta and her infant,—

Seed sown by God, to ripen for the harvest.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CONJUGAL POETRY, CONTINUED.

BONNIE JEAN.

It was as Burns's *wife* as well as his early love, that Bonnie Jean lives immortalized in her poet's songs, and that her name is destined to float in music from pole to pole. When they first met,

Burns was about six-and-twenty, and Jean Armour "but a young thing,"

Wi' tempting lips and roguish een,

the pride, the beauty, and the favorite toast of the village of Mauchline, where her father lived. To an early period of their attachment, or to the fond recollection of it in after times, we owe some of Burns's most beautiful and impassioned songs,—as

Come, let me take thee to this breast,
And pledge we ne'er shall sunder!
And I'll spurn as vilest dust,
The world's wealth and grandeur, &c.;

"O poortith cold and restless love;" "The kind love that's in her e'e;" "Lewis, what reck I by thee;" and many others. I conjecture, from a passage in one of Burns's letters, that Bonnie Jean also furnished the heroine and the subject of that admirable song, "O whistle, and I'll come to thee, my lad," so full of buoyant spirits and artless affection; it appears that she wished to have her name introduced into it, and that he afterwards altered the fourth line of the first verse to please her:—thus,

Thy Jeanie will venture wi' ye, my lad;

but this amendment has been rejected by singers and editors, as injuring the musical accentuation; the anecdote, however, and the introduction of the name, give an additional interest and a truth to the sentiment, for which I could be content to

sacrifice the beauty of a single line, and methinks Jeanie had a right to dictate in this instance.* With regard to her personal attractions, Jean was at this time a blooming girl, animated with health, affection, and gayety; the perfect symmetry of her slender figure; her light step in the dance; the "waist sae jimp," "the foot sae sma'," were no fancied beauties; she had a delightful voice, and sung with much taste and enthusiasm the ballads of her native country; among which we may imagine that the songs of her lover were not forgotten. The consequences, however, of all this dancing, singing, and loving were not quite so poetical as they were embarrassing.

O wha could prudence think upon,
And sic a lassie by him?
O wha could prudence think upon,
And sae in love as I am?

Burns had long been distinguished in his rustic neighborhood for his talents, for his social qualities and his conquests among the maidens of his own rank. His personal appearance is thus described from memory by Sir Walter Scott: "His form was strong and robust, his manner rustic, not clownish; with a sort of dignified simplicity, which received part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents; * * * his

* "A dame whom the graces have attired in witchcraft, and whom the loves have armed with lightning—a fair one—herself the heroine of the song, insists on the amendment—and dispute her commands if you dare!"—*Burns's Letters.*

eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament; it was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed, (I say literally, *glowed*,) when he spoke with feeling and interest;"—"his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark this:"* and Allan Cunningham, speaking also from recollection, says, "he had a very manly countenance, and a very dark complexion; his habitual expression was intensely melancholy, but at the presence of those he loved or esteemed, his whole face beamed with affection and genius;"†—"his voice was very musical; and he excelled in dancing, and all athletic sports which required strength and agility."

Is it surprising that powers of fascination, which carried a Duchess "off her feet," should conquer the heart of a country lass of low degree? Bonnie Jean was too soft-hearted, or her lover too irresistible; and though Burns stepped forward to repair their transgression by a written acknowledgment of marriage, which, in Scotland, is sufficient to constitute a legal union, still his circumstances, and his character as a "wild lad," were such, that nothing could appease her father's indignation; and poor Jean, when humbled and weakened by the consequences of her fault and her sense of

* Lockhart's Life of Burns, p. 153.
† Life of Burns, p. 268.

shame, was prevailed on to destroy the document of her lover's fidelity to his vows, and to reject him.

Burns was nearly heart-broken by this dereliction, and between grief and rage was driven to the verge of insanity. His first thought was to fly the country; the only alternative which presented itself, "was America or a jail;" and such were the circumstances under which he wrote his "Lament," which, though not composed in his native dialect, is poured forth with all that energy and pathos which only truth could impart.

No idly feigned poetic pains,
My sad, love-lorn lamenting claim;
No shepherd's pipe—Arcadian strains,
No fabled tortures, quaint and tame:
The plighted faith—the mutual flame—
The oft-attested powers above—
The promised father's tender name—
These were the pledges of my love! &c.

This was about 1786: two years afterwards, when the publication of his poems had given him name and fame, Burns revisited the scenes which his Jeanie had endeared to him: thus he sings exultingly,—

I'll aye ca' in by yon town
And by yon garden-green, again:
I'll aye ca' in by yon town,
And see my Bonnie Jean again!

They met in secret; a reconciliation took place; and the consequences were, that Bonnie Jean,

being again exposed to the indignation of her family, was literally turned out of her father's house. When the news reached Burns he was lying ill; he was lame from the consequences of an accident,—the moment he could stir, he flew to her, went through the ceremony of marriage with her in presence of competent witnesses, and a few months afterwards he brought her to his new farm at Elliesland, established her under his roof as his wife, and the honored mother of his children.

It was during this *second-hand* honeymoon, happier and more endeared than many have proved in their first gloss, that Burns wrote several of the sweetest effusions ever inspired by his Jean; even in the days of their early wooing, and when their intercourse had all the difficulty, all the romance, all the mystery, a poetical lover could desire. Thus practically controverting his own opinion, "that conjugal love does not make such a figure in poesy as that other love," &c.—for instance, we have that most beautiful song, composed when he left his Jean at Ayr, (in the *west* of Scotland,) and had gone to prepare for her at Elliesland, near Dumfries.*

Of a' the airts the win' can blaw, I dearly love the west,
For there the bonnie lassie lives, the lass that I love best!
There wild woods grow and rivers row, and mony a hill between;
But day and night, my fancy's flight is ever wi' my Jean!

* Life of Burns, p. 247.

I see her in the dewy flowers, I see her sweet and fair—
I hear her in the tuneful birds, wi' music charm the air.
There's not a bonnie flower that springs by fountain, shaw, or green,
There's not a bonnie bird that sings, but minds me o' my Jean.

O blaw ye westlin winds, blaw soft among the leafy trees:
Wi' gentle gale, fra' muir and dale, bring hame the laden bees!
And bring the lassie back to me, that's aye sae sweet and clean,
Ae blink o' her wad banish care, sae lovely is my Jean!

What sighs and vows, amang the knowes, hae past between us twa!
How fain to meet! how wae to part!—that day she gaed awa!
The powers above can only ken, to whom the heart is seen,
That none can be sae dear to me, as my sweet lovely Jean!

Nothing can be more lovely than the luxuriant, though rural imagery, the tone of placid but deep tenderness, which pervades this sweet song; and to feel all its harmony, it is not necessary to sing it—it is music in itself.

In November, 1788, Mrs. Burns took up her residence at Elliesland, and entered on her duties as a wife and mistress of a family, and her husband welcomed her to her home ("her ain roof-tree,") with the lively, energetic, but rather unquotable song, "I hae a wife o' my ain;" and subsequently

he wrote for her, "O were I on Parnassus Hill," and that delightful little bit of simple feeling—

> She is a winsome wee thing,
> She is a handsome wee thing,
> She is a bonnie wee thing,
> This sweet wee wife of mine.
> I never saw a fairer,
> I never lo'ed a dearer,—
> And next my heart I'll wear her,
> For fear my jewel tine!

and one of the finest of all his ballads, "Their groves o' green myrtle," which not only presents a most exquisite rural picture to the fancy, but breathes the very soul of chastened and conjugal tenderness.

I remember, as a particular instance—I suppose there are thousands—of the tenacity with which Burns seizes on the memory, and twines round the very fibres of one's heart, that when I was travelling in Italy, along that beautiful declivity above the river Clitumnus, languidly enjoying the balmy air, and gazing with no careless eye on those scenes of rich and classical beauty, over which memory and fancy had shed

> A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
> Enveloping the earth;

even then, by some strange association, a feeling of my childish years came over me, and all the livelong day I was singing, *sotto voce*—

Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
Where bright-beaming summers exalt the perfume;
Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green bracken,
Wi' the burn stealing under the long yellow broom!

Far dearer to me are yon humble broom bowers,
Where the bluebell and gowan lurk lowly unseen,
For there, lightly tripping among the wild flowers,
A' listening the linnet, oft wanders my Jean.

Thus the heath, and the bluebell, and the gowan, had superseded the orange and the myrtle on those Elysian plains,

Where the crush'd weed sends forth a rich perfume.

And Burns and Bonnie Jean were in my heart and on my lips, on the spot where Virgil had sung, and Fabius and Hannibal met.

Besides celebrating her in verse, Burns has left us a description of his Bonnie Jean in prose. He writes (some months after his marriage) to his friend Miss Chalmers,—"If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the country. Mrs. Burns believes, as firmly as her creed, that I am *le plus bel esprit, et le plus honnête homme* in the universe; although she scarcely ever in her life, (except reading the Scriptures and the Psalms of David in metre,) spent five minutes to-

gether on either prose or verse. I must except also a certain late publication of Scots Poems, which she has perused very devoutly, and all the ballads in the country, as she has (O, the partial lover! you will say) the finest woodnote-wild I ever heard."

After this, what becomes of the insinuation that Burns made an unhappy marriage,—that he was "compelled to invest her with the control of his life, whom he seems at first to have selected only for the gratification of a temporary inclination;" and, "that to this circumstance much of his misconduct is to be attributed?" Yet this, I believe, is a prevalent impression. Those whose hearts have glowed, and whose eyes have filled with delicious tears over the songs of Burns, have reason to be grateful to Mr. Lockhart, and to a kindred spirit, Allan Cunningham, for the generous feeling with which they have vindicated Burns and his Jean. Such aspersions are not only injurious to the dead and cruel to the living, but they do incalculable mischief:—they are food for the flippant scoffer at all that makes the "poetry of life." They unsettle in gentler bosoms all faith in love, in truth, in goodness—(alas, such disbelief comes soon enough!) they chill and revolt the heart, and "take the rose from the fair forehead of an innocent love to set a blister there."

"That Burns," says Lockhart, "ever sank into a toper, that his social propensities ever interfered with the discharge of the duties of his office, or

that, in spite of some transitory follies, he ever ceased to be a most affectionate husband—all these charges have been insinuated, and they are all *false*. His aberrations of all kinds were occasional, not systematic; they were the aberrations of a man whose moral sense was never deadened—of one who encountered more temptations from without and from within, than the immense majority of mankind, far from having to contend against, are even able to imagine," and who died in his thirty-sixth year, "ere he had reached that term of life up to which the passions of many have proved too strong for the control of reason, though their mortal career being regarded as a whole, they are honored as among the most virtuous of mankind."

We are told also of "the conjugal and maternal tenderness, the prudence and the unwearied forbearance of his Jean,"—and that she had much need of forbearance is not denied; but he ever found in her affectionate arms, pardon and peace, and a sweetness that only made the sense of his occasional delinquencies sting the deeper.

She still survives to hear her name, her early love, and her youthful charms, warbled in the songs of her native land. He, on whom she bestowed her beauty and her maiden truth, dying, has left to her the mantle of his fame. What though she be now a grandmother? to the fancy, she can never grow old, or die. We can never bring her before our thoughts but as the lovely, graceful country girl, "lightly tripping among the wild flowers," and

warbling, " Of a' the airs the win' can blaw,"—and this, O women, is what genius can do for you! Wherever the adventurous spirit of her countrymen transport them, from the spicy groves of India to the wild banks of the Mississippi, the name of Bonnie Jean is heard, bringing back to the wanderer sweet visions of home, and of days of " Auld lang Syne." The peasant-girl sings it " at the ewe milking," and the high-born fair breathes it to her harp and her piano. As long as love and song shall survive, even those who have learned to appreciate the splendid dramatic music of Germany and Italy, who can thrill with rapture when Pasta,

> Queen and enchantress of the world of sound,
> Pours forth her soul in song;

or when Sontag

> Carves out her dainty voice as readily
> Into a thousand sweet distinguished tones,

even *then* shall still have a soul for the " Banks and braes of Bonnie Doon," still keep a corner of their hearts for truth and nature—and Burns's Bonnie Jean.

* * * * *

While my thoughts are yet with Burns,—his name before me,—my heart and my memory still under that spell of power which his genius flings around him, I will add a few words on the subject of his supernumerary loves; for he has celebrated

few imaginary heroines. Of these rustic divinities, one of the earliest, and by far the most interesting, was Mary Campbell, (his "Highland Mary,") the object of the deepest passion Burns ever felt; the subject of some of his loveliest songs, and of the elegy "To Mary in Heaven."

Whatever this young girl may have been in person or condition, she must have possessed some striking qualities and charms to have inspired a passion so ardent, and regrets so lasting, in a man of Burns's character. She was not his first love, nor his second, nor his third; for from the age of sixteen there seems to have been no interregnum in his fancy. His heart, he says, was "completely tender, and eternally lighted up by some goddess or other." His acquaintance with Mary Campbell began when he was about two or three-and-twenty: he was then residing at Mossgiel, with his brother, and she was a servant on a neighbouring farm. Their affection was reciprocal, and they were solemnly plighted to each other. "We met," says Burns, "by appointment, on the second Sunday in May, in a sequestered spot by the banks of the Ayr, where we spent a day in taking a farewell, before she should embark for the West Highlands, to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life." "This adieu," says Mr. Cromek, "was performed with all those simple and striking ceremonials which rustic sentiment has devised to prolong tender emotions and to impose awe. The lovers stood on each side of a small

purling brook; they laved their hands in the stream, and holding a Bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other." This very Bible has recently been discovered in the possession of Mary Campbell's sister. On the boards of the Old Testament is inscribed, in Burns's handwriting, "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, I am the Lord."—*Levit.* chap. xix. v. 12. On the boards of the New Testament, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths."—*St. Matth.* chap. v. v. 33, and his own name in both. Soon afterwards, disasters came upon him, and he thought of going to try his fortune in Jamaica. Then it was, that he wrote the simple, wild, but powerful lyric, "Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary?"

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave old Scotia's shore?
Will ye go the Indies, my Mary,
Across the Atlantic's roar?

O sweet grows the lime and the orange,
And the apple on the pine;
But all the charms o' the Indies
Can never equal thine.

I hae sworn by the heavens to my Mary,
I hae sworn by the heavens to be true;
And sae may the heavens forget me
When I forget my vow!

O plight me your faith, my Mary!
And plight me your lily-white hand;

O plight me your faith, my Mary,
Before I leave Scotia's strand.

We hae plighted our faith, my Mary,
In mutual affection to join;
And curst be the cause that shall part us—
The hour, and the moment of time!

As I have seen among the Alps the living stream rise, swelling and bubbling, from some cleft in the mountain's breast, then, with a broken and troubled impetuosity, rushing amain over all impediments,—then leaping, at a bound, into the abyss below; so this song seems poured forth out of the full heart, as if a gush of passion had broken forth, that could not be restrained; and so the feeling seems to swell and hurry through the lines, till it ends in one wild burst of energy and pathos—

And curst be the cause that shall part us—
The hour, and the moment of time!

A few months after this "day of parting love," on the banks of the Ayr, Mary Campbell set off from Inverary to meet her lover, as I suppose, to take leave of him; for it should seem that no thoughts of a union could then be indulged. Having reached Greenock, she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried her to the grave in a few days; so that the tidings of her death reached her lover, before he could even hear of her illness. How deep and terrible was the shock to his strong and ardent mind,—how lasting the

memory of this early love, is well known. Years after her death, he wrote the song of "Highland Mary."*

O pale, pale now those rosy lips
I oft hae kiss'd so fondly!
And clos'd for aye the sparkling glance
That dwelt on me sae kindly!

And mouldering now in silent dust,
The heart that lo'ed me dearly;
But aye within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary.

The elegy "To Mary in Heaven," was written about a year after his marriage, on the anniversary of the day on which he heard of the death of Mary Campbell. The account of the feelings and the circumstances under which it was composed, was taken from the recital of Bonnie Jean herself, and cannot be read without a thrill of emotion. "According to her, Burns had spent that day, though laboring under a cold, in the usual work of his harvest, and apparently in excellent spirits. But as the twilight deepened, he appeared to grow 'very sad about something,' and at length wandered out into the barn-yard, to which his wife, in

* Beginning,—

"Ye banks and braes and streams around
The castle o' Montgomerie."

As the works of Burns are probably in the hands of all who will read this little book, those who have not his finest passages by heart, can easily refer to them. I felt it therefore superfluous to give at length the song alluded to.

her anxiety for his health, followed him, entreating him, in vain, to observe that frost had set in, and to return to his fireside. On being again and again requested to do so, he always promised compliance, but still remained where he was, striding up and down slowly, and contemplating the sky, which was singularly clear and starry. At last, Mrs. Burns found him stretched on a heap of straw, with his eyes fixed on a beautiful planet, 'that shone like another moon,' and prevailed on him to come in." * He complied; and immediately on entering the house, wrote down, as they now stand, the stanzas "To Mary in Heaven."

Mary Campbell was a poor peasant-girl, whose life had been spent in servile offices, who could just spell a verse in her Bible, and could not write at all,—who walked barefoot to that meeting on the banks of the Ayr, which her lover has recorded. But Mary Campbell will live to memory while the music and the language of her country endure. Helen of Greece and the Carthage Queen are not more surely immortalized than this plebeian girl.—The scene of parting love, on the banks of the Ayr, that spot where "the golden hours, on angel-wings," hovered over Burns and his Mary, is classic ground; Vaucluse and Penshurst are not more lastingly consecrated: and like the copy of Virgil, in which Petrarch noted down the death of Laura, which many have made a pilgrimage but to look on, even such a relic shall

* Lockhart's Life of Burns.

be the Bible of Highland Mary. Some far-famed collection shall be proud to possess it; and many hereafter shall gaze, with glistening eyes, on the handwriting of *him*,—who by the mere power of truth and passion, shall live in all hearts to the end of time.

* * * * *

Some other loves commemorated by Burns are not very interesting or reputable. "The lassie wi' the lint white locks," the heroine of many beautiful songs, was an erring sister, who, as she was the object of a poet's admiration, shall be suffered to fade into a shadow. The subject of the song,

> Had we never lov'd sae kindly—
> Had we never lov'd sae blindly—
> Never met—or never parted—
> We had ne'er been broken-hearted,

was also real, and I am afraid, a person of the same description. Of these four lines, Sir Walter Scott has said, "that they were worth a thousand romances;" and not only so, but they are in themselves a complete romance. They are the *alpha* and *omega* of feeling; and contain the essence of an existence of pain and pleasure, distilled into one burning drop. Of almost all his songs the heroines are real, though we must not suppose he was in love with all of them,—that were too unconscionable; but he sought inspiration, and found it, where he could not have hoped any farther boon. In one of his letters to Mr. Thompson, for

whose collection of Scottish airs he was then adapting words, he says, "Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in *song*, to be in some degree equal to your divine airs, do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation?—*tout au contraire.* I have a glorious recipe, the very one that, for his own use, was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus,—I put myself on a regimen of admiring a fine woman."

Thus the original blue eyes which inspired that sweet song, "Her een sae bonnie blue," belonged to a Miss Jeffreys, now married and living at New York. We owe "She's fair and she's false," to the fickleness of a Miss Jane Stuart, who, it is said, jilted the poet's friend, Alexander Cunningham.—"The bonnie wee thing," was a very little, very lovely creature, a Miss Davies; and the song, it has been well said, is as brief and as beautiful as the lady herself. The heroine of "O saw ye bonnie Leslie," is now Mrs. Cumming of Logie: Mrs. Dugald Stewart, herself a delightful poetess, inspired the pastoral song of Afton Water; and every woman has an interest in "Green grow the Rashes." All the compliments that were ever paid us by the other sex, in prose and verse, may be summed up in Burns's line,

What signifies the life o' man, 'an 'twere na for the lassies O?

It were, however, an endless task to give a list

of his heroines; and those who are curious about the personal history of the poet, of which his songs are "part and parcel," must be referred to higher and more general sources of information.*

Burns used to say, after he had been introduced into society above his own rank in life, that he saw nothing in the *gentlemen* much superior to what he had been accustomed to; but that a refined and elegant woman was a being of whom he could have formed no previous idea. This, I think, will explain, if it does not excuse, the characteristic freedom of some of his songs. His love is ardent and sincere, and it is expressed with great poetic power, and often with the most exquisite pathos; but still it is the love of a peasant for a peasant, and he woos his rustic beauties in a style of the most entire equality and familiarity. It is not the homage of one who waited, a suppliant, on the throne of triumphant beauty. "He drew no magic circle of lofty and romantic thought around those he loved, which could not be passed without lowering them from stations little lower than the angels."† Still, his faults against taste and propriety are far fewer and lighter than might have been expected from his habits; and as he acknowledged that he could have formed no idea of a woman refined by high breeding and education, we cannot be surprised if he sometimes committed solecisms of

* To the "Reliques of Burns, by Cromek;" to the Edition of the Scottish Songs, with notes, by Allan Cunningham; and to Lockhart's Life of Burns.

† Allan Cunningham.

which he was scarcely aware. For instance, he met a young lady, (Miss Alexander, of Ballochmyle,) walking in her father's grounds, and struck by her charms and elegance, he wrote in her honor his well known song, "The lovely lass of Ballochmyle," and sent it to her. He was astonished and offended that no notice was taken of it; but really, a young lady, educated in a due regard for the *convenances* and the *bienséances* of society, may be excused, if she was more embarrassed than flattered by the homage of a poet, who talked, at the first glance, of "clasping her to his bosom." It was rather precipitating things.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONJUGAL POETRY, CONTINUED.

MONTI AND HIS WIFE.

Monti, who is lately dead, will at length be allowed to take the place which belongs to him among the great names of his country. A poet is ill calculated to play the part of a politician; and the praise and blame which have been so profusely and indiscriminately heaped on Monti while living, must be removed by time and dispassionate criticism, before justice can be done to him, either as a man or

a poet. The mingled grace and energy of his style obtained him the name of *il Dante grazioso*, and he has left behind him something striking in every possible form of composition,—lyric, dramatic, epic, and satirical.

Amid all the changes of his various life, and all the trying vicissitudes of spirits—the wear and tear of mind which attend a poet by profession, tasked to almost constant exertion, Monti possessed two enviable treasures;—a lovely and devoted wife, with a soul which could appreciate his powers and talents, and exult in his fame; and a daughter equally amiable, and yet more beautiful and highly gifted. He has immortalized both; and has left us delightful proofs of the charm and the glory which poetry can throw round the purest and most hallowed relations of domestic life.

When Monti was a young man at Rome, caressed by popes and nephews of popes, and with the most brilliant ecclesiastical preferment opening before him, all his views in life were at once *bouleversé* by a passion, which does sometimes in real life play the part assigned to it in romance—trampling on interest and ambition, and mocking at cardinals' hats and tiaras. Monti fell into love and fell out of the good graces of his patrons: he threw off the habit of an *abbate*,* married his Teresa, in spite of the world and fortune; and instead of an aspiring priest, became a great poet.

Teresa Pichler was the daughter of Pichler,

* Worn by the young men who are intended for the Church.

the celebrated gem engraver. I have heard her described, by those who knew her in her younger years, as one of the most beautiful creatures in the world. Brought up in the studio of her father, in whom the spirit of ancient art seemed to have revived for modern times, Teresa's mind as well as person had caught a certain impress of antique grace, from the constant presence of beautiful and majestic forms: but her favorite study was music, in which she was a proficient; her voice and her harp made as many conquests as her faultless figure and her bright eyes. After her marriage she did not neglect her favorite art; and she, whose talent had charmed Zingarelli and Guglielmi, was accustomed, in their hours of domestic privacy, to soothe, to enchant, to inspire, her husband. Monti, in one of his poems, has tenderly commemorated her musical powers. He calls on his wife during a period of persecution, poverty, and despondency, to touch her harp, and as she was wont, rouse his sinking spirit, and unlock the source of nobler thoughts.

Stendi, dolce amor mio! sposa diletta!
A quell' arpa la man; che la soave,
Dolce fatica di tue dite aspetta.
Svegliami l'armonia, ch' entro le cave
Latebre alberga del sonoro legno,
E de' forti pensier volgi la chiave!

There is a resemblance in the *sentiment* of these verses, to some stanzas addressed by a living English poet to his wife;—she who, like Monti's Teresa,

can strike her harp, till, as a spirit caught in some spell of his own teaching, music itself seems to flutter, imprisoned among the chords,—to come at her will and breathe her thought, rather than obey her touch!—

> Once more, among these rich and golden strings
> Wander with thy white arm, dear Lady pale!
> And when at last from thy sweet discord springs
> The aerial music,—like the dreams that veil
> Earth's shadows with diviner thoughts and things,
> O let the passion and the time prevail!—
> O bid thy spirit through the mazes run!
> For music is like love, and must be won! &c.*

The Italian verses have great power and beauty; but the English lines have the superiority, not in poetry only, but in rhythmical melody. They fall on the ear like a strain from the harp which inspired them—full, and rich, and thrilling sweet,—and not to be forgotten!

To return to Monti;—no man had more completely that temperament which is supposed to accompany genius. He was fond, and devoted in his domestic relations; but he was variable in spirits, ardent, restless, and subject to fits of gloom. And how often must the literary disputes and political *tracasseries* in which he was engaged, have embittered and irritated so susceptible a mind and temper! If his wife were at his side to soothe him with her music, and her smiles, and her tenderness,—it was well,—the cloud passed away. If she were

* Barry Cornwall.

absent, every suffering seemed aggravated, and we find him—like one spoiled and pampered, with attention and love,—yielding to an irritable despondency, which even the presence of his children could not alleviate.

> Che più ti resta a far per mio dispetto,
> Sorte crudel? mia donna è lungi, e io privo,
> De' suoi conforti in miserando aspetto
> Egro qui giacciò, al' sofferir sol vivo! *

But the most remarkable of all Monti's conjugal effusions, is a canzone written a short time before his death, and when he was more than seventy years of age. Nothing can be more affecting than the subdued tone of melancholy tenderness, with which the gray-haired poet apostrophizes her who had been the love, the pride, the joy of his life for forty years. In power and in poetry, this canzone will bear a comparison with many of the more rapturous effusions of his youth. The occasion on which it was composed is thus related in a note prefixed to it by the editor.† When Monti was recovering from a long and dangerous illness, through which he had been tenderly nursed by his wife and daughter, he accompanied them "in villeggiatura," to a villa near Brianza, the residence of a friend, where they were accustomed to celebrate the birthday of Madame Monti; and it was

* Opere Varie, v. iii. This sonnet to his wife was written when Monti was ill at the house of his son-in-law, Count Perticari.

† Edit. 1826, vol. vi.

here that her husband, now declining in years, weak from recent illness and accumulated infirmities, addressed to her the poem which may be found in the recent edition of his works; it begins thus tenderly and sweetly—

Donna! dell' alma mia parte più cara!
Perchè muta in pensosa atto mi guati?
E di segrete stille,
Rugiadose si fan le tue pupille? &c.

"Why, O thou dearer half of my soul, dost thou watch over me thus mute and pensive? Why are thine eyes heavy with suppressed tears?" &c.

And when he reminds her touchingly, that his long and troubled life is drawing to its natural close, and that she cannot hope to retain him much longer, even by all her love and care,—he adds with a noble spirit,—"Remember, that Monti cannot wholly die! think, O think! I leave thee dowered with no obscure, no vulgar name! for the day shall come, when, among the matrons of Italy, it shall be thy boast to say,—'I was the love of Monti.'"*

The tender translation to his daughter—

E tu del pari sventurata e cara mia figlia!

as alike unhappy and beloved, alludes to her recent widowhood. Costanza Monti, who inherited no small portion of her father's genius, and all her mother's grace and beauty, married the Count

* In the original, Monti designates himself by an allusion to his chef-d'œuvre—"Del Cantor di Basville."

Giulio Perticari of Pesaro, a man of uncommon taste and talents, and an admired poet. He died in the same year with Canova, to whom he had been a favorite friend and companion: while his lovely wife furnished the sculptor with a model for his ideal heads of vestals and poetesses. Those who saw the Countess Perticari at Rome, such as she appeared seven or eight years ago, will not easily forget her brilliant eyes, and yet more brilliant talents. She, too, is a poetess. In her father's works may be found a little canzone written by her about a year after the death of her husband, and with equal tenderness and simplicity, alluding to her lonely state, deprived of him who once encouraged and cultivated her talents, and deserved her love.*

Vincenzo Monti died in October, 1828;—his widow and his daughter reside, I believe, at Milan.

CHAPTER XXIII.

POETS AND BEAUTIES,

FROM CHARLES II. TO QUEEN ANNE.

THUS, then, it appears, that love, even the most ethereal and poetical, does not always take flight

* Monti, Opere, vol. iii. p. 75.

"at sight of human ties;" and Pope wronged the real delicacy of Heloise when he put this borrowed sentiment into her epistle, making that conduct the result of perverted principle, which, in *her*, was a sacrifice to extreme love and pride in its object. It is not the mere idea of bondage which frightens away the light-winged god;

> The gentle bird feels no captivity
> Within his cage, but sings and feeds his fill.*

It is when those bonds, which were first decreed in heaven

> To keep two hearts together, which began
> Their spring-time with one love,

are abused to vilest purposes:—to link together indissolubly, unworthiness with desert, truth with falsehood, brutality with gentleness; then, indeed, love is scared; his cage becomes a dungeon;—and either he breaks away, with plumage all impaired, —or folds up his many-colored wings, and droops and dies.

But then it will be said, perhaps, that the splendor and the charm which poetry has thrown over some of these pictures of conjugal affection and wedded truth, are exterior and adventitious, or, at best, short-lived:—the bands were at first graceful and flowery;—but sorrow dewed them with tears, or selfish passions sullied them, or death tore them

* Spenser.

asunder, or trampled them down. It may be so; but still, I will aver that what has been, *is;*—that there is a power in the human heart which survives sorrow, passion, age, death itself.

> Love I esteem more strong than age,
> And truth more permanent than time.

For happiness, *c'est different!* and for that bright and pure and intoxicating happiness which we weave into our youthful visions, which is of such stuff as dreams are made of,—to complain that this does not last and wait upon us through life, is to complain that earth is *earth*, not heaven. It is to repine that the violet does not outlive the spring; that the rose dies upon the breast of June; that the gray evening shuts up the eye of day, and that old age quenches the glow of youth: for is not such the condition under which we exist? All I wished to prove was, that the sacred tie which binds the sexes together, which gives to man his natural refuge in the tenderness of woman, and to woman her natural protecting stay in the right reason and stronger powers of man, so far from being a chill to the imagination, as wicked wits would tell us, has its poetical side. Let us look back for a moment on the array of bright names and beautiful verse, quoted or alluded to in the preceding chapters: what is there among the mercurial poets of Charles's days, those notorious scoffers at decency and constancy, to compare with them?—Dorset and Denham, and Sedley and Suckling, and Roch-

ester,—"the mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease," with their smooth emptiness, and sparkling commonplaces of artificial courtship, and total want of moral sentiment, have degraded, not elevated the loves they sang. Could these gallant fops rise up from their graves, and see themselves exiled with contempt from every woman's toilet, every woman's library, every woman's memory, they would choke themselves with their own periwigs, eat their laced cravats, hang themselves in their own sword-knots!—"to be discarded thence!"

> Turn thy complexion there,
> Thou simpering, smooth-lipp'd cherub, Coxcombry,
> Ay, there, look grim as hell!

And such be the fate of all who dare profane the altar of beauty with adulterate incense!

> For wit is like the frail luxuriant vine,
> Unless to virtue's prop it join;
> Though it with beauteous leaves and pleasant fruit be crown'd,
> It lies deform'd and rotting on the ground!

These lines are from Cowley, a great name among the poets of those days; but he has sunk into a *name*. We may repeat with Pope, "Who now reads Cowley?" and this, not because he was licentious, but because, with all his elaborate wit, and brilliant and uncommon thoughts, he is as frigid as ice itself. "A little ingenuity and artifice," as Mrs. Malaprop would say, is well enough; but Cowley, in his amatory poetry, is all artifice.

He coolly sat down to write a volume of love verses, that he might, to use his own expression, "be free of his craft, as a poet;" and in his preface, he protests "that his testimony should not be taken against himself." Here was a poet, and a lover! who sets out by begging his readers, in the first place, not to believe him. This was like the weaver, in the Midsummer Night's Dream, who was so anxious to assure the audience "that Pyramus was not killed indeed, and that he, Pyramus, was not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver." But Cowley's amatory verse disproves itself, without the help of a prologue. It is, in his own phrase, "all sophisticate." Even his sparkling chronicle of beauties,

> Margaretta first possest,
> If I remember well, my breast, &c.

is mere fancy, and in truth it is a pity. Cowley was once in love, after his querulous melancholy fashion; but he never had the courage to avow it. The lady alluded to in the last verse of the Chronicle, as

> Eleonora, first of the name,
> Whom God grant long to reign,

was the object of this luckless attachment. She afterwards married a brother of Dr. Spratt, Bishop of Rochester,* who had not probably half the poet's wit or fame, but who could love as well and speak better; and the gentle, amiable Cowley died an old bachelor.

* Spence's Anecdotes, Sing. edit.

These writers may have merit of a different kind; they may be read by wits for the sake of their wit; but they have failed in the great object of lyric poetry: they neither create sympathy for themselves, nor interest, nor respect for their mistresses: they were not in earnest;—and what woman of sense and feeling was ever touched by a compliment which no woman ever inspired? or pleased, by being addressed with the swaggering license of a libertine? Who cares to inquire after the originals of their Belindas and Clorindas—their Chloes, Delias, and Phillises, with their pastoral names, and loves—that were any thing but pastoral? There is not one among the flaunting coquettes, or profligate women of fashion, sung by these gay coxcomb poets,

> Those goddesses, so blithe, so smooth, so gay,
> Yet empty of all good wherein consists
> Woman's domestic honor and chief praise,

who has obtained an interest in our memory, or a permanent place in the history of our literature; not one, who would not be eclipsed by Bonnie Jean, or Highland Mary! It is true, that the age produced several remarkable women; a Lady Russell, that heroine of heroines! a Lady Fanshawe;* a Mrs. Hutchinson; who needed no poet to trumpet forth their praise: and others,—some celebrated for the possession of beauty and talents,

* See her beautiful Memoirs, recently published.

and too many notorious for the abuse of both. But there were no poetical heroines, properly so called, —no Laura, no Geraldine, no Saccharissa. Among the temporary idols of the day, (by which name we shall distinguish those women whose beauty rank, and patronage, procured them a sort of poetical celebrity, very different from the halo of splendor which love and genius cast round a chosen divinity,) there are one or two who deserve to be particularized.

The first of these was Maria Beatrice d'Este, the daughter of the Duke of Modena, second wife of James Duke of York, and afterwards his queen. She was married, at the age of fifteen, to a profligate prince, as ugly as his brother Charles, (without any of his captivating graces of figure and manner,) and old enough to be her grandfather. She made the best of wives to one of the most unamiable of men. All writers of all parties are agreed, that slander itself was disarmed by the unoffending gentleness of her character; all are agreed too, on the subject of her uncommon loveliness: she was quite an Italian beauty, with a tall, dignified, graceful figure, regular features, and dark eyes, a complexion rather pale and fair, and hair and eyebrows black as the raven's wing; so that in personal graces, as in virtues, she fairly justified the rapturous eulogies of all the poets of her time. Thus Dryden:

> What awful charms on her fair forehead sit,
> Dispensing what she never will admit;

Pleasing yet cold—like Cynthia's silver beam,
The people's wonder, and the poet's theme!

She captivated hearts almost as fast as James the Second lost them;

And Envy did but look on her and died!*

Her fall from the throne she so adorned; her escape with her infant son, under the care of the Duc de Lauzun;† her conduct during her retirement at St. Germains, with a dull court, and a stupid bigoted husband, are all matters of history, and might have inspired, one would think, better verses than were ever written upon her. Lord Lansdown exclaims, with an enthusiasm which was at least disinterested—

O happy James! content thy mighty mind!
Grudge not the world, for still thy Queen is kind,—
To lie but at whose feet, more glory brings,
Than 'tis to tread on sceptres and on kings! ‡

Anne Killegrew, who has been immortalized by Dryden, in the ode,§

Thou youngest virgin-daughter of the skies!

does not seem to have possessed any talents or acquirements which would render her *very* remark-

* Dryden's Works, by Scott, vol. xi. p. 32.

† The Duc de Lauzun of Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

‡ Grenville's Works,—"Progress of Beauty."

§ "To the pious memory of the accomplished young lady, Miss Anne Killegrew, excellent in the two sister arts of poesy and painting."

able in these days; though in her own time she was styled "a grace for beauty and a muse for wit." Her youth, her accomplishments, her captivating person, her station at court, (as a maid of honor to Maria d'Este, then Duchess of York,) and her premature death at the age of twenty-four, all conspired to render her interesting to her contemporaries; and Dryden has given her a fame which cannot die. The stanza in this ode, in which the poet for himself and others, pleads guilty of having "made prostitute and profligate the muse,"

> Whose harmony was first ordain'd above
> For tongues of angels and for hymns of love!

—the sudden turn in praise of the young poetess, whose verse flowed pure as her own mind and heart; and the burst of enthusiasm—

> Let this thy vestal, heaven! atone for all!

are exceeding beautiful. His description of her skill in painting both landscape and portraits, would answer for a Claude, or a Titian. We are a little disappointed to find, after all this pomp and prodigality of praise, that Anne Killegrew's paintings were mediocre; and that her poetry has sunk, not undeservedly, into oblivion. She died of the small-pox in 1685.

The famous Tom Killegrew, jester (by courtesy) to Charles the Second, was her uncle.

There was also the young Duchess of Ormond, (Lady Mary Somerset, daughter of the Duke of

Beaufort.) She married into a family which had been, for three generations, the patrons and benefactors of Dryden; and never was patronage so richly repaid. To this Duchess of Ormond, Dryden has dedicated the Tale of Palemon and Arcite, in an opening address full of poetry and compliment;—happily both justified and merited by the object.

Lady Hyde, afterwards Countess of Clarendon and Rochester, was in her time a favorite theme of gay and gallant verse; but she maintained with her extreme beauty and gentleness of deportment, a dignity of conduct which disarmed scandal, and kept presumptuous wits as well as presumptuous fops at a distance. Lord Lansdown has crowned her with praise, very pointed and elegant, and seems to have contrasted her at the moment, with his coquettish Mira, Lady Newburgh.

> Others, by guilty artifice and arts,
> And promised kindness, practise on our hearts;
> With expectation blow the passion up;
> *She* fans the fire without one gale of hope.*

Lady Hyde was the daughter of Sir William Leveson Gower, (ancestor to the Marquis of Stafford,) and mother of that Lord Cornbury, who has been celebrated by Pope and Thomson.

The second daughter of this lovely and amiable woman, Lady Catherine Hyde, was Prior's famous Kitty,

* See the lines on Lady Hyde's picture in Granville's Poems.

Beautiful and young,
And wild as colt untam'd,

the "female Phaeton," who obtained mamma's chariot for a day, to set the world on fire.

Shall I thumb holy books, confin'd
With Abigails forsaken?
Kitty's for other things design'd,
Or I am much mistaken.

Must Lady Jenny frisk about,
And visit with her cousins?
At balls must she make all this rout,
And bring home hearts by dozens?

What has she better, pray, than I?
What hidden charms to boast,
That all mankind for her must die,
Whilst I am scarce a toast?

Dearest Mamma! for once, let me
Unchain'd my fortune try:
I'll have my Earl as well as she,
Or know the reason why.

Fondness prevail'd, Mamma gave way:
Kitty, at heart's desire,
Obtain'd the chariot for a day,
And set the world on fire!

Kitty not only set the world on fire, but more than accomplished her magnanimous resolution to have an Earl as well as her sister, Lady Jenny.* She married the Duke of Queensbury: and as *that* Duchess of Queensbury, who was the friend and

* Lady Jane Hyde married the Earl of Essex.

patroness of Gay, is still farther connected with the history of our poetical literature. Pope paid a compliment to her beauty, in a well-known couplet, which is more refined in the application than in the expression :—

> If Queensbury to strip there 's no compelling,
> 'Tis from a handmaid we must take a Helen.

She was an amiable, exemplary woman, and possessed that best and only preservative of youth and beauty,—a kind, cheerful disposition and buoyant spirits. When she walked at the coronation of George the Third, she was still so strikingly attractive, that Horace Walpole handed to her the following impromptu, written on a leaf of his pocket-book,

> To many a Kitty, Love, his car,
> Would for a day engage;
> But Prior's Kitty, ever fair,
> Obtained it for an age!

She is also alluded to in Thomson's Seasons.

> And stooping thence to Ham's embowering walks,
> Beneath whose shades, in spotless peace retir'd,
> With her the pleasing partner of his heart,
> The worthy Queensbury yet laments his Gay.
>
> *Summer.*

The Duchess of Queensbury died in 1777.*

* On the death of Gay, Swift had addressed to the Duchess a letter of condolence in his usual cynical style. The Duchess replied with feeling—"I differ from you, that it is possible to comfort one's self for the loss of friends, as one does for the loss of money. I think I could live on very little, nor think myself

Two other women, who lived about the same time, possess a degree of celebrity which, though but a sound—a name—rather than a feeling or an interest, must not pass unnoticed; more particularly as they will farther illustrate the theory we have hitherto kept in view. I allude to "Granville's Mira," and "Prior's Chloe."

For the fame of the first, a single line of Pope has done more than all the verses of Lord Lansdown: it is in the Epistle to Jervas the painter—

> With Zeuxis' Helen, thy Bridgewater vie,
> And these be sung, till Granville's Mira die!

Now, "Granville's Mira" would have been *dead* long ago, had she not been preserved in some material more precious and lasting than the poetry of her noble admirer: she shines, however, "embalmed in the lucid amber" of Pope's lines; and we not only wonder how she got there, but are tempted to inquire who she was, or if ever she was at all.

Granville's Mira was Lady Frances Brudenel, third daughter of the Earl of Cardigan. She was married very young to Livingstone, Earl of Newburgh; and Granville's first introduction to her must have taken place soon after her marriage, in 1690; he was then about twenty, already distin-

poor, nor be thought so; but a *little* friendship could never satisfy one. In almost every thing but friends, another of the same name may do as well; but *friend* is more than a name, *if* it be any thing."—This is true; but, as Touchstone says—"much virtue in *if*!"

guished for that elegance of mind and manner, which has handed him down to us as "Granville the polite." He joined the crowd of Lady Newburgh's adorers, and as some praise, and some lucky lines had persuaded him that he was a poet, he chose to consecrate his verse to this fashionable beauty.

In all the mass of poetry, or rather rhyme, addressed to Lady Newburgh, there is not a passage, —not a single line which can throw an interest round her character; all we can make out is, that she was extremely beautiful; that she sang well; and that she was a most finished, heartless coquette. Thus her lover has pictured her:

> Lost in a labyrinth of doubts and joys,
> Whom now her smiles revived, her scorn destroys;
> She will, and she will not, she grants, denies,
> Consents, retracts; advances, and then flies.
> Approving and rejecting in a breath,
> Now proffering mercy, now presenting death!

She led Granville on from year to year, till the death of her first husband, Lord Newburgh. He then presented himself among the suitors for her hand, confiding, it seems, in former encouragement or promises; but Lady Newburgh had played the same despicable game with others; she had no objection to the poetical admiration of an accomplished young man of fashion, who had rendered her an object of universal attention, by his determined pursuit and tuneful homage, and who was

then the admired of all women. She thought, like the coquette, in one of Congreve's comedies,

> If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
> The heart that others bleed for—bleed for me!

But when free to choose, she rejected him and married Lord Bellew. Her coquettry with Granville had been so notorious, that this marriage caused a great sensation at the time and no little scandal.

> Rumor is loud, and every voice proclaims
> Her violated faith and conscious flames.

The only catastrophe, however, which her falsehood occasioned, was the production of a long elegy, in imitation of Theocritus, which concludes Lord Lansdown's amatory effusions. He afterwards married Lady Anne Villiers, with whom he lived happily: after a union of more than twenty years, they died within a few days of each other, and they were buried together.

Lady Newburgh left a daughter by her first husband,* and a son and daughter by Lord Bellew; she lived to survive her beauty, to lose her admirers, and to be the object in her old age of the most gross and unmeasured satire; the flattery of a lover elevated her to a divinity, and the malice of a wit, whom she had ill-treated, degraded her into a fury and a hag—with about as much reason.

* Charlotte, Countess of Newburgh in her own right, from whom the present Earl of Newburgh is descended.

Prior's Chloe, the "nut-brown maid," was taken from the opposite extremity of society, but could scarce have been more worthless. She was a common woman of the lowest description, whose real name was, I believe, Nancy Derham,—but it is not a matter of much importance.

Prior's attachment to this woman, however unmerited, was very sincere. For her sake he quitted the high society into which his talents and his political connections had introduced him; and for her, he neglected, as he tells us—

> Whate'er the world thinks wise and grave,
> Ambition, business, friendship, news,
> My useful books and serious muse,

to bury himself with her in some low tavern for weeks together. Once, when they quarrelled, she ran away and carried off his plate; but even this could not shake his constancy: at his death he left her all he possessed, and she—his Chloe—at whose command and in whose honor he wrote his "Henry and Emma,"—married a cobbler!* Such was Prior's Chloe.

Is it surprising that the works of a poet once so popular, should now be banished from a lady's library?—a banishment from which all his sprightly wit cannot redeem him. But because Prior's love for this woman was real, and that he was really a man of feeling and genius, though debased by low and irregular habits, there are some sweet touches

* Spence's Anecdotes.

scattered through his poetry, which show how strong was the illusion in his fancy:—as in "Chloe Jealous."

> Reading thy verse, "who cares," said I,
> "If here or there his glances flew?
> Free forever be his eye,
> Whose heart to me is always true!"

And in his "Answer to Chloe Jealous."

> O when I am wearied with wandering all day
> To thee, my delight, in the evening I come.
> No matter what beauties I saw in my way,
> They were but my visits, but thou art my home!

The address to Chloe, with which the "Nut brown Maid" commences,

> Thou, to whose eyes I bend, &c.

will ever be admired, and the poems will always find readers among the young and gentle-hearted who have not yet learned to be critics or to tremble at the fiat of Dr. Johnson. It is perhaps one of the most popular poems in the language.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

STELLA AND VANESSA.

It is difficult to consider Swift as a poet. So many unamiable, disagreeable, unpoetical ideas are connected with his name, that, great as he was in fame and intellectual vigor, he seems as misplaced in the temple of the muses as one of his own yahoos. But who has not heard of "Swift's Stella?" and of Cadenus and Vanessa? Though all will confess that the two devoted women, who fell victims to his barbarous selfishness, and whose names are eternally linked with the history of our literature, are far more interesting, from their ill-bestowed, ill-requited and passionate attachment to *him*, than by any thing he ever sung or said of *them*.* Nay, his most elaborate, and his most admired poem—the avowed history of one of his attachments—with its insipid tawdry fable, its conclusion in which nothing is concluded, and the inferences we are left to draw from it, would have given but an ignomin-

* As Swift said truly and wittily of himself:

As when a lofty pile is raised,
We never hear the workmen praised,
Who bring the lime or place the stones,
But all admire Inigo Jones;
So if this pile of scattered rhymes
Should be approved in after-times,
If it both pleases and endures,
The merit and the praise are yours!—*Verses to Stella.*

ious celebrity to poor Vanessa, if truth and time, and her own sweet nature, had not redeemed her.

I pass over Swift's early attachment to Jane Waryng, whom he deserted after a seven years' engagement; she is not in any way connected with his literary history,—and what became of her afterwards is not known. He excused himself by some pitiful subterfuges about fortune; but it appears, from a comparison of dates, that the occasion of his breaking off with her, was his rising partiality for another.

When Swift was an inmate of Sir William Temple's family at Moor Park, he met with Esther Johnson, who appears to have been a kind of humble companion to Sir William's niece, Miss Gifford. She is said by some to have been the daughter of Sir William's steward; by others we are told that her father was a London merchant, who had failed in business. This was the interesting and ill-fated woman, since renowned as "Swift's Stella."

She was then a blooming girl of fifteen, with silky black hair, brilliant eyes, and delicate features. Her disposition was gentle and affectionate; and she had a mind of no common order. Swift sometimes employed his leisure in instructing Sir William's niece, and Stella was the companion of her studies. Her beauty, talents, and docility, interested her preceptor, who, though considerably older than herself, was in the vigor of his life and intellectual powers; and she repaid this interest

with all the idolatry of a young unpractised heart, mingled with a gratitude and reverence almost filial. When he took possession of his living in Ireland, he might have married her; for she loved him, and he knew it. She was perfectly independent of any family ties, and had a small property of her own: but what were really his views or his intentions it is impossible to guess; nor are the reasons of that most extraordinary arrangement, by which he contrived to bind this devoted creature to him for life, and to enslave her heart and soul to him forever, without assuming the character either of a husband or a lover. He persuaded her to leave England; and, under the sanction and protection of a respectable elderly woman named Dingley, often alluded to in his humorous poems, to take up her residence near him at Laracor. Subsequently, when he became Dean of St. Patrick's, she had a lodging in Dublin. He was accustomed to spend part of every day in her society, but never without the presence of a third person; and when he was absent, the two ladies took possession of his residence, and occupied it till his return.

Two years after her removal to Ireland, and when she was in her twentieth year, Stella was addressed by a young clergyman, whose name was Tisdal; and sensible of the humiliating and equivocal situation in which she was placed, and unable to bring Swift to any explanation of his views or sentiments, she appears to have been inclined to

favor the addresses of her new admirer. He proposed in form; but Swift, without in any way committing himself, contrived to prevent the marriage. Stella found herself precisely in the same situation as before, and every year increased his influence over her young and gentle spirit, as habit confirmed and strengthened the bonds of a first affection. She lived on in the hope that he would at length marry her; bearing his sullen outbreakings of temper, soothing his morbid misanthropy, cheering and adorning his life; and giving herself every day fresh claims to his love, compassion, and gratitude, by her sufferings, her virtues, her patient gentleness, and her exclusive devotion;—and all availed not! During this extraordinary connection, Swift was accustomed to address her in verse. Some of these poems, though worthless as poetry, derive interest from the beauty of her character, and from that concentrated vigor of expression which was the characteristic of all he wrote; as in this descriptive passage:—

> Her hearers are amazed from whence
> Proceeds that fund of wit and sense,
> Which, though her modesty would shroud,
> Breaks like the sun behind a cloud;
> While gracefulness its art conceals,
> And yet through every motion steals.
> Say, Stella, was Prometheus blind,
> And forming you, mistook your kind?
> No; 'twas for you alone he stole
> The fire that forms a manly soul;
> Then, to complete it every way,

He moulded it with female clay:
To *that* you owe the nobler flame,
To *this* the beauty of your frame.

He compliments her sincerity and firmness of principle in four nervous lines:

Ten thousand oaths upon record
Are not so sacred as her word!
The world shall in its atoms end
Ere Stella can deceive a friend!

Her tender attention to him in sickness and suffering, is thus described, with a tolerable insight into his own character.

To her I owe
That I these pains can undergo;
She tends me like an humble slave,
And, when indecently I rave,
When out my brutish passions break,
With gall in every word I speak,
She, with soft speech, my anguish cheers,
Or melts my passions down with tears:
Although 'tis easy to descry
She wants assistance more than I,
She seems to feel my pains alone,
And is a Stoic to her own.
Where, among scholars, can you find
So soft, and yet so firm a mind?

These lines, dated March, 1724, are the more remarkable, because they refer to a period when Stella had much to forgive;—when she had just been injured, in the tenderest point, by the man who owed to her tenderness and forbearance all

the happiness that his savage temper allowed him to taste on earth.

As Stella passed much of her time in solitude, she read a great deal. She received Swift's friends, many of whom were clever and distinguished men, particularly Sheridan and Delany; and on his public days she dined as a guest at his table, where, says his biographer,* "the modesty of her manners, the sweetness of her disposition, and the brilliance of her wit, rendered her the general object of admiration to all who were so happy as to have a place in that enviable society."

Johnson says that, "if Swift's ideas of women were such as he generally exhibits, a very little sense in a lady would enrapture, and a very little virtue astonish him;" and thinks, therefore, that Stella's supremacy might be "only local and comparative;" but it is not the less true, that she was beheld with tenderness and admiration by all who approached her; and whether she could spell or not,† she could certainly write very pretty verses, considering whom she had chosen for her model:— for instance, the following little effusion, in reply to a compliment addressed to her:

If it be true, celestial powers,
That you have formed me fair,
And yet, in all my vainest hours,
My mind has been my care;

* Sheridan's Life of Swift.

† Dr. Johnson, who allows Stella to have been "virtuous, beautiful, and elegant," says she could not spell her own language: in those days few women *could* spell accurately.

Then, in return, I beg this grace,
As you were ever kind,
What envious time takes from my face,
Bestow upon my mind!

She had continued to live on in this strange undefinable state of dependence for fourteen years, "in pale contented sort of discontent," though her spirit was so borne down by the habitual awe in which he held her, that she never complained—when the suspicion that a younger and fairer rival had usurped the heart she possessed, if not the rights she coveted, added the tortures of jealousy to those of lingering suspense and mortified affection.

A new attachment had, in fact, almost entirely estranged Swift from her, and from his home. While in London, from 1710 to 1712, he was accustomed to visit at the house of Mrs. Vanhomrigh, and became so intimate, that during his attendance on the ministry at that time, he was accustomed to change his wig and gown, and drink his coffee there almost daily. Mrs. Vanhomrigh had two daughters: the eldest, Esther, was destined to be the second victim of Swift's detestable selfishness, and become celebrated under the name of Vanessa.

She was a character altogether different from that of Stella. Not quite so beautiful in person, but with all the freshness and vivacity of youth—(she was not twenty,) and adding to the advantages of polished manners and lively talents, a

frank confiding temper, and a capacity for strong affections. She was rich, admired, happy, and diffusing happiness. Swift, as I have said, visited at the house of her mother. His age, his celebrity, his character as a clergyman, gave him privileges of which he availed himself. He was pleased with Miss Vanhomrigh's talents, and undertook to direct her studies. She was ignorant of the ties which bound him to the unhappy Stella; and charmed by his powers of conversation, dazzled by his fame, won and flattered by his attentions, surrendered her heart and soul to him before she was aware; and her love partaking of the vivacity of her character, not only absorbed every other feeling, but, as she expressed it herself, "became blended with every atom of her frame." *

Swift, among his other lessons, took pains to impress her with his own favorite maxims (it had been well for both had he acted up to them himself)—"to speak the truth on all occasions, and at every hazard: and to do what seemed right in itself, without regard to the opinions or customs of the world." He appears also to have insinuated the idea, that the disparity of their age and fortune rendered him distrustful of his own powers of pleasing.† She was thus led on, by his open admiration, and her own frank temper, to betray the state of her affections, and proffered to him

* See her Letters.

† See some very poor verses found in Miss Vanhomrigh's desk, and inserted in his poems, vol. x. p. 14.

her hand and fortune. He had not sufficient humanity, honor, or courage, to disclose the truth of his situation, but replied to the avowal of this innocent and warm-hearted girl, first in a tone of raillery, and then by an equivocal offer of everlasting friendship.

The scene is thus given in Cadenus and Vanessa.

Vanessa, though by Pallas taught,
By love invulnerable thought,
Searching in books for wisdom'd aid,
Was in the very search betrayed.
* * * *
Cadenus many things had writ;
Vanessa much esteemed his wit,
And call'd for his poetic works.
Meantime the boy in secret lurks;
And, while the book was in her hand
The urchin from his private stand
Took aim, and shot with all his strength
A dart of such prodigious length,
It pierced the feeble volume through,
And deep tranfix'd her bosom too.
Some lines, more moving than the rest,
Stuck to the point that pierced her breast,
And borne directly to the heart,
With pains unknown, increas'd her smart.
Vanessa, not in years a score,
Dreams of a gown of forty-four;
Imaginary charms can find,
In eyes with reading almost blind.
Cadenus now no more appears
Declin'd in health, advanc'd in years;
She fancies music in his tongue,
Nor farther looks, but thinks him young.

Vanessa is then made to disclose her tenderness. The expressions and the sentiments are probably as true to the facts as was consistent with the rhyme: but how cold, how flat, how prosaic! no emotion falters in the lines—not a feeling blushes through them!—as if an ardent but delicate and gentle girl would ever have made a first avowal of passion in this *chop-logic* style—

> "Now," said the Nymph, "to let you see
> My actions with your rules agree;
> That I can vulgar forms despise,
> And have no secrets to disguise;
> I knew, by what you said and writ,
> How dangerous things were men of wit;
> You caution'd me against their charms,
> But never gave me equal arms;
> Your lessons found the weakest part,
> Aim'd at the head, but reached the heart!"
> Cadenus felt within him rise
> Shame, disappointment, guilt, surprise, &c.
> * * * * *

It is possible he might have felt thus; and yet the excess of his *surprise* and *disappointment* on the occasion, may be doubted. He makes, however, a very candid confession of his own vanity.

> Cadenus, to his grief and shame,
> Could scarce oppose Vanessa's flame;
> And though her arguments were strong,
> At least could hardly wish them wrong:
> Howe'er it came, he could not tell,
> But sure she never talked so well.
> His pride began to interpose;

Preferred before a crowd of beaux!
So bright a nymph to come unsought!
Such wonder by his merit wrought!
'Tis merit must with her prevail!
He never knew her judgment fail.
She noted all she ever read,
And had a most discerning head!

The scene continues—he rallies her, and affects to think it all

Just what coxcombs call a bite,

(such is his elegant phrase.) He then offers her friendship instead of love: the lady replies with very pertinent arguments; and finally, the tale is concluded in this ambiguous passage, in which we must allow that great room is left for scandal, for doubt, and for curiosity.

But what success Vanessa met
Is to the world a secret yet;—
Whether the nymph, to please her swain,
Talks in a high romantic strain,
Or whether he at last descends
To act with less seraphic ends;
Or to compound the business, whether
They temper love and books together;
Must never to mankind be told,
Nor shall the conscious Muse unfold.

Such is the story of this celebrated poem. The passion, the circumstances, the feelings are real, and it contains lines of great power; and yet, assuredly, the perusal of it never conveyed one

emotion to the reader's heart, except of indignation against the writer; not a spark of poetry, fancy, or pathos, breathes throughout. We have a dull mythological fable, in which Venus and the Graces descend to clothe Vanessa in all the attractions of her sex:—

> The Graces next would act their part,
> And showed but little of their art;
> Their work was half already done,
> The child with native beauty shone,
> The outward form no help required;—
> Each, breathing on her thrice, inspired
> That gentle, soft, engaging air,
> Which in old times advanced the fair.

And Pallas is tricked by the wiles of Venus into doing *her* part.—The Queen of Learning

> Mistakes Vanessa for a boy;
> Then sows within her tender mind
> Seeds long unknown to womankind,
> For manly bosoms chiefly fit,—
> The seeds of knowledge, judgment, wit.
> Her soul was suddenly endued
> With justice, truth, and fortitude,—
> With honor, which no breath can stain,
> Which malice must attack in vain;
> With open heart and bounteous hand, &c.

The nymph thus accomplished is feared by the men and hated by the women, and Swift has shown his utter want of heart and good taste, by making his homage to the woman he loved, a vehicle for the bitterest satire on the rest of her

sex. What right had he to accuse us of a universal preference for mere coxcombs,—he who, through the sole power of his wit and intellect, had inspired with the most passionate attachment two lovely women not half his own age? Be it remembered, that while Swift was playing the Abelard with such effect, he was in his forty-fifth year, and though

> He moved and bowed, and talked with so much grace
> Nor showed the parson in his gait or face,*

he was one of the ugliest men in existence,—of a bilious, saturnine complexion, and a most forbidding countenance.

The poem of Cadenus and Vanessa was written immediately on his return to Ireland and to Stella, (where he describes himself devoured by melancholy and regret,) and sent to Vanessa. Her passion and her inexperience seem to have blinded her to what was humiliating to herself in this poem, and left her sensible only to the admiration it expressed, and the hopes it conveyed. She wrote him the most impassioned letters; and he replied in a style which, without committing himself, kept alive all her tenderness, and riveted his influence over her.

Meanwhile, what became of Stella? Too quick-sighted not to perceive the difference in Swift's manner, pining under his neglect, and struck to the heart by jealousy, grief, and resentment, her

*"The Author on himself," (Swift's Poems.)

health gave way. His pitiful resolve never to see her alone, precluded all complaint or explanation The Mrs. Dingley who had been chosen for her companion, was merely calculated to save appearances;—respectable, indeed, in point of reputation, but selfish, narrow-minded, and weak. Thus abandoned to sullen, silent sorrow, the unhappy Stella fell into an alarming state; and her destroyer was at length roused to some remorse, by the daily spectacle of the miserable wreck he had caused. He commissioned his friend Dr. Ashe, "to learn the secret cause of that dejection of spirits which had so visibly preyed on her health; and to know whether it was by any means in his power to remove it?" She replied, "that the peculiarity of her circumstances, and her singular connection with Swift for many years, had given great occasion for scandal; that she had learned to bear this patiently, hoping that all such reports would be effaced by marriage; but she now saw, with deep grief, that his behaviour was totally changed and that a cold indifference had succeeded to the warmest professions of eternal affection. That the necessary consequences would be an indelible stain fixed on her character, and the loss of her good name, which was dearer to her than life."*

Swift answered that in order to satisfy Miss Johnson's scruples, and relieve her mind, he was ready to go through the mere ceremony of marriage with her, on two conditions;—first, that

* Sheridan's Life of Swift, p. 316.

they should live separately exactly as they did before;—secondly, that it should be kept a profound secret from all the world.* To these conditions, however hard and humiliating, she was obliged to submit: and the ceremony was performed privately by Dr. Ashe, in 1716. This nominal marriage spared her at least some of the torments of jealousy, by rendering a union with her rival impossible.

Yet, within a year afterwards, we find this ill-fated rival, the yet more unhappy Vanessa,—more unhappy because endued by nature with quicker passions, and far less fortitude and patience,—following Swift to Ireland. She had a plausible pretext for this journey, being heiress to a considerable property at Celbridge, about twelve miles from Dublin, on which she came to reside with her sister;† but her real inducement was her

* How pertinaciously Swift adhered to these conditions, is proved by the fact, that after the ceremony, he never saw her alone; and that several years after, when she was in a dangerous state of health, and he was writing to a friend about providing for her comforts, he desires "that she might not be brought to the Deanery-house on any account, as it was a very improper place for her to breathe her last in."—*Sheridan's Life*, p. 356.

† "Marley Abbey, near Celbridge, where Miss Vanhomrigh resided, is built much in the form of a real cloister, especially in its external appearance. An aged man, (upwards of ninety, by his own account,) showed the grounds to my correspondent. He was the son of Mrs. Vanhomrigh's gardener, and used to work with his father in the garden when a boy. He remembered the unfortunate Vanessa well; and his account of her corresponded with the usual description of her person, especially as to her *embonpoint*. He said she went seldom abroad, and saw little

unconquerable love for him. Nothing could be more *mal apropos* to Swift than her arrival in Dublin: placed between two women, thus devoted to him, his perplexity was not greater than his heartless duplicity deserved: nothing could extricate him but the simple but desperate expedient of disclosing the truth, and this he could not or would not do: regardless of the sacred ties which now bound him to Stella, he continued to correspond with Vanessa and to visit her; but "the whole course of this correspondence precludes the idea of a guilty intimacy."* *She*, whose passion was as pure as it was violent and exclusive, asked but to be his wife. She would have flung down

company; her constant amusement was reading, or walking in the garden. Yet, according to this authority, her society was courted by several families in the neighbourhood, who visited her, notwithstanding her seldom returning that attention; and he added, that her manners interested every one who knew her,—but she avoided company, and was always melancholy save when Dean Swift was there, and then she seemed happy. The garden was to an uncommon degree crowded with laurels. The old man said, that when Miss Vanhomrigh expected the Dean, she always planted with her own hand a laurel or two against his arrival. He showed her favorite seat, still called Vanessa's Bower. Three or four trees, and some laurels, indicate the spot. They had formerly, according to the old man's information, been trained into a close arbor. There were two seats and a rude table within the bower, the opening of which commanded a view of the Liffey, which had a romantic effect; and there was a small cascade that murmured at some distance. In this sequestered spot, according to the old gardener's account, the Dean and Vanessa used often to sit, with books and writing materials on the table before them."—*Scott's Life of Swift.*

* Scott's Life of Swift.

her fortune and herself at his feet, and bathed them with tears of gratitude, if he would have deigned to lift her to his arms. In the midst of all the mortification, anguish, and heart-wearing suspense to which his stern temper and inexplicable conduct exposed her, still she clung to the hopes he had awakened, and which either in cowardice, or compassion, or selfish egotism, he still kept alive. He concludes one of his letters with the following sentence in French, "mais soyez assurée, que jamais personne au monde n'a été aimée, honorée, estimée, adorée, par votre amie, que vous:"* and there are other passages to the same effect, little agreeing with his professions to poor Stella:—one or the other, or both, must have been grossly deceived.

After declarations so explicit, Vanessa naturally wondered that he proceeded no farther; it appears that he sometimes endeavored to repress her overflowing tenderness, by treating her with a harshness which drove her almost to frenzy. There is really nothing in the effusions of Heloïse or Mdlle de l'Espinasse, that can exceed, in pathos and burning eloquence, some of her letters to him during this period of their connection.† When he

* Correspondence, (as quoted in Sheridan's Life of Swift.)

† I give one specimen, not as the most eloquent that could be extracted, but as most illustrative of the story.

"You bid me be easy, and you would see me as often as you could; you had better have said as often as you could get the better of your inclination so much; or, as often as you remembered there was such a person in the world. If you continue to

had reduced her to the most shocking and pitiable state, so that her life or her reason were threatened, he would endeavour to soothe her in language which again revived her hopes—

> Give the reed
> From storms a shelter,—give the drooping vine
> Something round which its tendrils may entwine,—
> Give the parch'd flower the rain-drop,—and the meed
> Of love's kind words to woman!*

It will be said, where was her sex's delicacy, where her woman's pride? Alas!—

> La Vergogna ritien debile amore,
> Ma debil freno è di potente amore.

In this agonizing suspense she lived through

treat me as you do, you will not be made uneasy by me long. 'Tis impossible to describe what I have suffered since I saw you last; I am sure I could have borne the rack much better than those killing, killing words of yours. Sometimes I have resolved to die without seeing you more; but those resolves, to your misfortune, did not last long, for there is something in human nature that prompts us to seek relief in this world. I must give way to it, and beg you would see me, and speak kindly to me; for I am sure you would not condemn any one to suffer what I have done, could you but know it. The reason I write to you is this, because I cannot tell it you, should I see you; for when I begin to complain, then you are angry, and there is something in your look so awful, that it strikes me dumb. Oh! that you may but have so much regard for me left, that this complaint may touch your soul with pity! I say as little as ever I can. Did you but know what I thought, I am sure it would move you. Forgive me, and believe, I cannot help telling you this, and live."—LETTERS, Vol. xix. page 421.

* Mrs. Hemans.

eight long years; till unable to endure it longer, and being aware of the existence of Stella, she took the decisive step of writing to her rival, and desired to know whether she was, or was not, married to Swift? Stella answered her immediately in the affirmative; and then, justly indignant that he should have given any other woman such a right in him as was implied by the question, she enclosed Vanessa's letter to Swift; and instantly, with a spirit she had never before exerted, quitted her lodgings, withdrew to the house of Mr. Ford, of Wood Park, and threw herself on the friendship and protection of his family.

This lamentable tragedy was now brought to a crisis. Swift, on receiving the letter, was seized with one of those insane paroxysms of rage to which he was subject. He mounted his horse, rode down to Celbridge, suddenly entered the room in which Vanessa was sitting. His countenance, fitted by nature to express the dark and fierce passions, so terrified her, that she could scarce ask him whether he would sit down? He replied savagely, "No!" and throwing down before her, her own letter to Stella, with a look of inexpressible scorn and anger, flung out of the room, and returned to Dublin.

This cruel scene was her death warrant.* Hitherto she had venerated Swift; and in the midst of her sufferings, confided in him, idolized him as the first of human beings. What must he now have appeared in her eyes?—They say, "Hell has no

* Johnson's Life of Swift.

fury like a woman scorned;"—it is not so: the recoil of the heart, when forced to abhor and contemn, where it has once loved, is far,—far worse; and Vanessa, who had endured her lover's scorn, could not scorn *him*, and live. She was seized with a delirous fever, and died "in resentment and in despair." * She desired, in her last will, that the poem of Cadenus and Vanessa, which she considered as a monument of Swift's love for her, should be published, with some of his letters, which would have explained what was left obscure, and have cleared her fame. The poem was published; but the letters, by the interference of Swift's friends, were, at the time, suppressed.

On her death, and Stella's flight, Swift absented himself from home for two months, nor did any one know whither he was gone. During that time, what must have been his feelings—*if* he felt at all? what agonies of remorse, grief, shame, and horror, must have wrung his bosom! he had, in effect, murdered the woman who loved him, as absolutely as if he had plunged a poniard into her heart: and yet it is not clear that Swift was a prey to any such feelings; at least his subsequent conduct gave no assurance of it. On his return to Dublin, mutual friends interfered to reconcile him with Stella. About this time, she happened to meet, at a dinner-party, a gentleman who was a stranger to the real circumstances of her situation, and who began to speak of the poem of Cadenus and Vanessa, then

* Johnson, Sheridan, Scott.

just published. He observed, that Vanessa must have been an admirable creature to have inspired the Dean to write so finely. "That does not follow," replied Mrs. Johnson, with bitterness; "it is well known that the Dean could write finely on a *broomstick*." Ah! how must jealousy and irritation, and long habits of intimacy with Swift have poisoned the mind and temper of this unhappy woman, before she could have uttered this cruel sarcasm!—And yet she was true to the softness of her sex; for after the lapse of several months, during which it required all the attention of Mr. Ford and his family to sustain and console her, she consented to return to Dublin, and live with the Dean on the same terms as before. Well does old Chaucer say,

> There can be no man in humblesse him acquite
> As woman can, ne can be half so true
> As woman be!

"Swift welcomed her to town," says Sheridan, "with that beautiful poem entitled 'Stella at Wood Park;'" that is to say, he welcomed back to the home from which he had driven her, the woman whose heart he had wellnigh broken, the wife he had every way injured and abused,—with a tissue of coarse sarcasms, on the taste for magnificence, she must have acquired in her visit to Wood Park, and the difficulty of descending

> From every day a lordly banquet
> To half a joint—and God be thanket!

From partridges and venison with the right *fumette*, —to

Small beer, a herring, and the Dean.

And this was all the sentiment, all the poetry with which the occasion inspired him!

Stella naturally hoped, that when her rival was no more, and Swift no longer exposed to her torturing reproaches, that he would do her tardy justice, and at length acknowledge her as his wife. But no;—it would have cost him some little mortification and inconvenience; and on such a paltry pretext he suffered this amiable and admirable woman, of whom he had said, that "her merits towards him were greater than ever was in any human being towards another;" and "that she excelled in every good quality that could possibly accomplish a human creature,"—this woman did he suffer to languish into the grave, broken in heart, and blighted in name. When Stella was on her death-bed, some conversation passed between them upon this sad subject. Only Swift's reply was audible: he said, "Well, my dear, it shall be acknowledged, if you wish it." To which she answered with a sigh, "It is *now* too late!" * It *was* too late!—

* Scott's Life of Swift.—Sheridan has recorded another interview between Stella and her destroyer, in which she besought him to acknowledge her before her death, that she might have the satisfaction of dying his wife; and he refused.

Dated Feb. 7, 1728, I find a letter from Swift to Martha Blount, written in a style of gay badinage, and her answer; and in neither is there the slightest allusion to his recent loss.—*Roscoe's Pope*, vol. viii. p. 460.

What now to her was womanhood or fame?

She died of a lingering decline, in January, 1728, four years after the death of Miss Vanhomrigh.

Thus perished these two innocent, warm-hearted and accomplished women;—so rich in all the graces of their sex—so formed to love and to be loved, to bless, and to be blessed,—sacrifices to the demoniac pride of the man they had loved and trusted. But it will be said, "si elles n'avaient point aimé, elles seraient moins connues:" they have become immortal by their connection with genius; they are celebrated, merely through their attachment to a celebrated man. But, good God! what an immortality! won by what martyrdom of the heart!—And what a celebrity! not that with which poet's love, and his diviner verse, crowns the dei object of his homage, but a celebrity purch with their life-blood and their tears! I quit subject with a sense of relief:—yet one more.

It was after the death of these two amiable women, who had deserved so much from him, and whose enduring tenderness had flung round his odious life and character their only redeeming charm of sentiment and interest, that the native grossness and rancor of this incarnate spirit of libel burst forth with tenfold virulence.* He showed

* It was after the death of Stella, that all Swift's coarsest satires were written. He was in the act of writing the last and most terrible of these, when he was seized with insanity: and it remains unfinished.

how true had been his love and his respect for *them*, by insulting and reviling, in terms a scavenger would disavow, the sex they belonged to. Swift's master-passion was pride,—an unconquerable, all-engrossing, self-revolving pride: he was proud of his vigorous intellect, proud of being the "dread and hate of half mankind,"—proud of his contempt for women,—proud of his tremendous powers of invective. It was his boast, that he never forgave an injury; it was his boast, that the ferocious and unsparing personal satire with which he avenged himself on those who offended him, had never been softened by the repentance, or averted by the concessions of the offender. Look at him in his last years, when the cold earth was heaped on those who would have cheered and soothed his dark and stormy spirit; without a friend—deprived of the mighty powers he had abused—alternately a driveling idiot and a furious maniac, and sinking from both into a helpless, hopeless, prostrate lethargy of body and mind!—Draw,—draw the curtain, in reverence to the human ruin, lest our woman's heart be tempted to unwomanly exultation!

CHAPTER XXXV.

POPE AND MARTHA BLOUNT.

If the soul of sensibility, which I believe Pope really possessed, had been inclosed in a healthful frame and an agreeable person, we might have reckoned him among our *preux chevaliers*, and have had sonnets instead of satires. But he seems to have been ever divided between two contending feelings. He was peculiarly sensible to the charms of women, and his habits as a valetudinarian, rendered their society and attention not only soothing and delightful, but absolutely necessary to him: while, unhappily, there mingled with this real love for them, and dependence on them as a sex, the most irascible self-love; and a torturing conscious ness of that feebleness and deformity of person, which imbittered all his intercourse with them. He felt that, in his character of poet, he co[illegible] v his homage, flatter their vanity, and excite their admiration and their fear; but, at the same time, he was shivering under the apprehension that, as a man, they regarded him with contempt; and that he could never hope to awaken in a female bosom any feelings corresponding with his own. So far he was unjust to us and to himself: his friend

Lord Lyttelton, and his enemy Lord Hervey,* might have taught him better.

On reviewing Pope's life, his works, and his correspondence, it seems to me that these two opposite feelings contending in his bosom from youth to age, will account for the general character of his poems with a reference to our sex:—will explain why women bear so prominent a part in all his works, whether as objects of poetical gallantry, honest admiration, or poignant satire: why there is not among all his productions more than one poem decidedly amatory, (and that one partly suppressed in the ordinary editions of his works,) while women only have furnished him with the materials of all his *chef-d'œuvres:* his Elegy, his "Rape of the Lock," the "Epistle of Heloïse," and the second of his Moral Essays. He may call us, and prove us, in his antithetical style, "a contradiction:"† but we may retort; for, as far as women are concerned, Pope was himself one miserable antithesis.

* * * * *

The "Elegy to the memory of an unfortunate Lady," refers to a tragedy which occurred in Pope's early life, and over which he has studiously drawn

* Lord Hervey, with an exterior the most forbidding, and almost ghastly, contrived to supersede Pope in the good graces of Lady M. W. Montagu; carried off Mary Lepell, the beautiful maid of honor, from a host of rivals, and made her Lady Hervey: and won the whole heart of the poor Princess Caroline, who is said to have died of grief for his loss.—*See Walpole's Memoirs of George II.*

† "Woman 's at best a contradiction still."

an impenetrable veil. When his friend Mr. Caryl wrote to him on the subject, many years after the Elegy was published, Pope, in his reply, left this part of the letter unnoticed; and a second application was equally unsuccessful. His biographers are not better informed. Johnson remarks upon the Elegy, that it commemorates the "amorous fury of a raving girl, who liked self-murder better than suspense;" and having given this deadly stroke with his critical fang, the grim old lion of literature stalks on and "stays no farther question." But is this merciful, or is it just? by what right does he sit in judgment on the unhappy dead, of whom he knew nothing? or how could he tell by what course of suffering, disease, or tyranny, a gentle spirit may have been goaded to frenzy? It was said, on the authority of some French author, that she was secretly attached to one of the French princes: that, in consequence, her uncle and guardian ("the mean deserter of a brother's blood,") forced her into a convent, where, in despair and madness, she put an end to her existence; and that the lines

> Why bade ye else, ye powers! her soul aspire
> Above the vulgar flight of low desire?
> Ambition first sprung from your blest abodes;
> The glorious fault of angels and of gods,—

refer to this ambitious passion. But then again, this has been contradicted. Warton's story is improbable and inconsistent with the poem;* and the as-

* See Roscoe's Life of Pope, p. 87. Warton says her name was Wainsbury, and that she hung herself.

sertion of another author,* that she was in love with Pope, and as deformed as himself, is most unlikely. "O ever beauteous, ever friendly!" is rather a strange style of apostrophizing one deformed in person; and exposed to misery, and driven to suicide, by a passion for himself. In short, it is all mystery, wonder, and conjecture.

Other women who have been loved, celebrated, or satirized by Pope, are at least more notorious, if not so interesting. His most lasting and real attachment, was that which he entertained for Theresa and Martha Blount, who alternately, or with divided empire, reigned in his heart or fancy for five-and-thirty years. They were of an old Roman Catholic family of Oxfordshire; and his acquaintance with them appears to have begun as early as 1707, when he was only nineteen. Theresa, the handsomest and most intelligent of the two sisters, was a brunette, with black sparkling eyes. Martha was short in stature, fair, with blue eyes, and a softer expression. They appear to have been tolerably amiable, and much attached to each other: *au reste*, in no way distinguished, but by the flattering admiration of a celebrated man, who has immortalized both.

The verses addressed to them, convey in general, either counsel or compliment, or at the most playful gallantry. His letters express something beyond these. He began by admiring Theresa; then he wavered: there were misunderstandings, and

* Warburton.

petulance, and mutual bickerings. His susceptibility exposed him to be continually wounded; he felt deeply and acutely; he was conscious that he could inspire no sentiment corresponding with that which throbbed at his own heart: and some passages in the correspondence cannot be read without a painful pity. At length, upon some mutual offence, his partiality for Theresa was transferred to Martha. In one of his last letters to Theresa, he says, beautifully and feelingly, "We are too apt to resent things too highly, till we come to know, by some great misfortune or other, how much we are born to endure; and as for me, you need not suspect of resentment a soul which can feel nothing but grief."

His attachment to Martha increased after his quarrel with Lady Mary W. Montagu, and ended only with his life.

"He was never," says Mr. Bowles, "indifferent to female society; and though his good sense prevented him, conscious of so many personal infirmities, from marrying, yet he felt the want of that sort of reciprocal tenderness and confidence in a female, to whom he might freely communicate his thoughts, and on whom, in sickness and infirmity, he could rely. All this Martha Blount became to him; by degrees, she became identified with his existence. She partook of his disappointments, his vexations, and his comforts. Wherever he went, his correspondence with her was never remitted; and when the warmth of gallantry was

over, the cherished idea of kindness and regard remained."*

To Martha Blount is addressed the compliment on her birthday—

> Oh be thou blest with all that heaven can send,—
> Long health, long youth, long pleasure, and a friend!

And an epistle sent to her, with the works of Voiture, in which he advises her against marriage, in this elegant and well-known passage,—

> Too much your sex are by their forms confin'd,
> Severe to all, but most to womankind;
> Custom, grown blind with age, must be your guide;
> Your pleasure is a vice, but not your pride.
> By nature yielding, stubborn but for fame,
> Made slaves by honor, and made fools by shame.
> Marriage may all those petty tyrants chase,
> But sets up one, a greater, in their place:
> Well might you wish for change, by those accurst,
> But the last tyrant ever proves the worst.
> Still in constraint your suffering sex remains,
> Or bound in formal or in real chains:
> Whole years neglected, for some months adored,
> The fawning servant turns a haughty lord.
> Ah, quit not the free innocence of life
> For the dull glory of a virtuous wife!
> Nor let false shows, nor empty titles please,—
> Aim not at joy, but rest content with ease.

Very excellent advice, and very disinterested, considering whence it came, and to whom it was addressed!!

* Bowles's edition of Pope, vol. i. p. 69.

The poem generally placed after this in his works, and entitled "Epistle to the *same* Lady, on leaving town after the Coronation," was certainly not addressed to Martha, but to Theresa. It appears from the correspondence, that Martha was not at the Coronation in 1715, and that Theresa was. The whole tenor of this poem is agreeable to the sprightly person and character of Theresa, while "Parthenia's softer blush," evidently alludes to Martha. From an examination of the letters which were written at this time, I should imagine, that though Pope had previously assured the latter that she had gained the conquest over her fair sister, yet the public appearance of Theresa at the Coronation, and her superior charms, revived all his tenderness and admiration, and suggested this gay and pleasing effusion.

In some fair evening, on your elbow laid,
You dream of triumphs in the rural shade;
In pensive thought recall the fancy'd scene,
See coronations rise on every green.
Before you pass th' imaginary sights
Of lords, and earls, and dukes, and garter'd knights,
While the spread fan o'ershades your closing eyes,—
Then give one flirt, and all the vision flies.
Thus vanish sceptres, coronets, and balls,
And leave you in lone woods or empty walls!

To Martha Blount is dedicated the "Epistle on the Characters of Women;" which concludes with this elegant and flattering address to her.

O! blest with temper, whose unclouded ray

Can make to-morrow cheerful as to-day;
She who can love a sister's charms, or hear
Sighs for a daughter with unwounded ear;
She who ne'er answers till a husband cools,
Or if she rules him, never shows she rules;
Charms by accepting, by submitting sways,
Yet has her humor most when she obeys;
Let fops or fortune fly which way they will,
Disdains all loss of tickets or codille;
Spleen, vapors, or smallpox, above them all,
And mistress of herself though China fall.

The allusion to her affection for her sister, is just and beautiful; but the compliment to her temper is understood not to have been quite merited—perhaps, was rather administered as a corrective; for Martha was weak and captious; and Pope, who had suffered what torments a female wit could inflict, possibly found that peevishness and folly have also their *désagrémens*. He complains frequently, in his letters to Martha, of the difficulty of pleasing her, or understanding her wishes. Methinks, had I been a poet, or Pope, I would rather have been led about in triumph by the spirited, accomplished Lady Mary, than "chained to the footstool of two paltry girls."

They used to employ him constantly in the most trifling and troublesome commissions, in which he had seldom even the satisfaction of contenting them. He was accustomed to send them little presents almost daily, as concert tickets, ribbons, fruit, &c. He once sent them a basket of peaches, which, with an affectation of careless gallantry, were sep-

arately wrapped in part of the manuscript translation of the Iliad: and he humbly requests them to return the wrappers, as he had no other copy. On another occasion he sent them fans, on which were inscribed his famous lines,

"Come, gentle air," th' Eolian shepherd said, &c.

Martha Blount was not so kind or so attentive to Pope in his last illness as she ought to have been. His love for *her* seemed blended with his frail existence; and when he was scarcely sensible to any thing else in the world, he was still conscious of the charm of her presence. "When she came into the room," says Spence, "it was enough to give a new turn to his spirits, and a temporary strength to him."

She survived him eighteen years, and died unmarried at her house in Berkeley Square, in 1762. She is described, about that time, as a little, fair, prim old woman, very lively, and inclined to gossip. Her undefined connection with Pope, though it afforded matter for mirth and wonder, never affected her reputation while living; and has rendered her name as immortal as our language and our literature. One cannot help wishing that she had been more interesting, and more worthy of her fame.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

POPE AND LADY M. W. MONTAGU.

In the same year with Martha Blount, and about the same age, died Lady Mary W. Montagu. Every body knows that she was one of Pope's early loves. She had, for several years, suspended his attachment to his first favorites, the Blounts; and she really deserved the preference. But the issue of this romantic attachment was the most bitter, the most irreconcilable enmity. The cause did not proceed so much from any one particular offence on either side, but rather from a multitude of trifling causes, arising naturally out of the characters of both.

When they first met, Pope was about six-and-twenty; and from the recent publication of the "Rape of the Lock," and "The Temple of Fame," &c., had reached the pinnacle of fashion and reputation. Lady Mary was in her twenty-third year, lately married to a man she loved, and had just burst upon the world in all the blaze of her wit and beauty. Her masculine acquirements and powers of mind—her strong good sense—her extensive views—her frankness, decision, and generosity—her vivacity, and her bright eyes, must altogether have rendered her one of the most fascinating, as she really was one of the most extraordinary, women that ever lived.

There stands, in a conspicuous part of this great city, a certain monument, erected, it is said, at the cost of the ladies of Britain; but in a spirit and taste which, I trust, are not those of my country-women at large. Is this our patriotism? We may applaud the brave, who go forth to battle to defend us, and preserve inviolate the sanctity of our hearths and homes; but does it become us to lend our voice to exult in victory, always bought at the expense of suffering, and aggravate the din and the clamor of war—we, who ought to be the peace-makers of the world, and plead for man against his own fierce passions? A huge brazen image stands up, an impudent (false) witness of our martial enthusiasm; but who amongst us has thought of raising a public statue to Lady Wortley Montagu! to her who has almost banished from the world that pest which once extinguished families and desolated provinces? To her true patriotic spirit,—to her magnanimity, her generous perseverance, in surmounting all obstacles raised by the outcry of ignorance, and the obstinacy of prejudice, we owe the introduction of inoculation; —she ought to stand in marble beside Howard the good.*

* In Litchfield Cathedral stands the only memorial ever raised, by public or private gratitude, to Lady Mary; it is a cenotaph, with Beauty weeping the loss of her preserver, and an inscription, of which the following words form the conclusion: "To perpetuate the memory of such benevolence, and to express her gratitude for the benefit she herself received from this alleviating art, this monument is erected by Henrietta Inge, relict of Theo

I should imagine that a strong impression must have been made on Lady Mary's mind by an incident which occurred just at the time she left England for Constantinople. Lord Petre,—he who is consecrated to fame in the Rape of the Lock, as the ravisher of Arabella Fermour's hair,—died of the smallpox at the age of three-and-twenty, just after his marriage with a young and beautiful heiress; his death caused a general sympathy, and added to the dread and horror which was inspired by this terrible disease: eighteen persons of his family had died of it within twenty-seven years. In those days it was not even allowable to mention, or allude to it in company.

Mr. Wortley was appointed to the Turkish embassy in 1716, and his wife accompanied him. The letters which passed between her and Pope, during her absence, are well known. In point of style and liveliness, the superiority is on the lady's side; but the tone of feeling in Pope is better, more earnest; his language is not always within the bounds of that sprightly gallantry with which a man naturally addresses a young, beautiful, and virtuous woman, who had condescended to allow his homage.*

dore William Inge, and daughter of Sir John Wrottesley, Bart., in 1789." One would like to have known the woman who raised this monument.

* "You shall see (said Lady Mary referring to these letters) what a goddess he made of me in some of them, though he makes such a devil of me in his writings afterwards, without any reason that I know of."—*Spence.*

In one of his letters, written immediately after her departure, he asks her how he had looked? how he had behaved at the last moment? whether he had betrayed any deeper feeling than propriety might warrant? "For if," he says, "my parting looked like that of a common acquaintance, I am the greatest of all hypocrites that ever decency made." And in a subsequent letter he says, very feelingly and significantly, "May that person (her husband) for whom you have left the world, be so just as to prefer you to all the world. I believe his good sense leads him to do so now, as gratitude will hereafter. May you continue to think him worthy of whatever you have done! may you ever look upon him with the eyes of a first lover, nay, if possible, with all the unreasonable happy fondness of an unexperienced one, surrounded with all the enchantments and ideas of romance and poetry! I wish this from my heart; and while I examine what passes there in regard to you, I cannot but glory in my own heart, that it is capable of so much generosity."

This was sufficiently clear. I need scarcely remark, *en passant*, that Pope's generosity and wishes were all *en pure perte;* his spitefulness must have been gratified by the sequel of Lady Mary's domestic bliss; her marriage ended in disgust and aversion; which, on her separation from Mr. Wortley, subsided into a good-humored indifference.*

* I remember seeing, I think, in one of D'Israeli's works, a

After a union of twenty-seven years, she parted from him and went to reside abroad. There were errors on both sides; but I am obliged to admit that Lady Mary, with all her fine qualities, had two faults,—intolerable and unpardonable faults in the eyes of a husband or a lover. She wanted softness of mind, and refinement of feeling, in the first place; and she wanted—how shall I express it?—she wanted neatness and personal delicacy; and was in short, that *odious* thing, a female sloven, as well as that *dangerous* thing, a female wit.

In those days the style of dress was the most hideous imaginable. The women wore a large quantity of artificial hair, in emulation of the tremendous periwigs of the men; and Pope, in one of his letters to Lady Mary, mentions her "full-bottomed wig," which, he says, "I did but assert to be a *bob*," and was answered, "Love is blind!" On her return from Turkey, she sometimes allowed her own fine dark hair to flow loose, and was fond of dressing in her Turkish costume. In this she was imitated by several beautiful women of the day, and particularly by her lovely contemporary, Lady Fanny Shirley, (Chesterfield's "Fanny, blooming fair:" he seems to have admired her as much as he could possibly admire any thing, next to himself and the Graces.) In her picture at Clarendon Park, she too appears in the habit of Fatima. *Apropos*, to the loves of the poets, Lady Fanny

fragment of some lines which Lady Mary wrote on her husband, and which expressed the utmost bitterness of female scorn.

deserves to be mentioned as the theme of all the rhymesters, and "the joy, the wish, the wonder, the despair," of all the beaux of her day.*

But it is time to return to Pope. The epistle of Heloïse to Abelard was published during Lady Mary's absence, and sent to her: and it is clear from a passage in one of his letters, that he wished her to consider the last lines,—from

> And sure, if fate some future bard shall join,

down to

> He best can paint them, who can feel them most,

as applicable to himself and to his feelings towards her.

And yet, whatever might have been his devotion to Lady Mary before she went abroad, it was increased tenfold after her memorable travels. At present, when ladies of fashion make excursions of pleasure to the pyramids of Egypt and the ruins of Babylon, a journey to Constantinople is little more than a trip to Rome or Vienna; but in the last age it was a prodigious and marvellous undertaking; and Lady Mary, on her return, was gazed upon as an object of wonder and curiosity, and

* See, in Pope's Miscellanies, the sprightly stanzas, beginning "Yes, I beheld th' Athenian Queen." They are addressed to Lady Fanny, who had presented the poet with a standish, and two pens, one of steel and one of gold. She was the fourth daughter of Earl Ferrers. After numbering more adorers in her train than any beauty of her time, she died unmarried, in 1778. —*Collins's Peerage, by Brydges.*

sought as the most entertaining person in the world: her sprightliness and her beauty, her oriental stories and her Turkish costume, were the rage of the day. With Pope, she was on the most friendly terms:—by his interference and negotiation, a house was procured for her and Mr. Wortley, at Twickenham, so that their intercourse was almost constant. When he finished his translation of the Iliad, in 1720, Gay wrote him a complimentary poem, in which he enumerates the host of friends who welcomed the poet home from Greece; and among them, Lady Mary stands conspicuous.

What lady's that to whom he gently bends?
Who knows not her! Ah, those are Wortley's eyes;
How art thou honored, numbered with her friends,—
For she distinguishes the good and wise!

To this period we may also refer the composition of the Stanzas to Lady Mary, which begin, "In beauty and wit."* The measure is trivial and disagreeable, but the compliments are very sprightly and pointed.

She sat to Kneller for him in her Turkish dress; and we have the following note from him on the subject, which shows how much he felt the condescension.

* In beauty and wit,
No mortal as yet,
To question your empire has dared;
But men of discerning
Have thought that, in learning,
To yield to a lady was hard.

"The picture dwells really at my heart, and I have made a perfect passion of preferring your present face to your past. I know and thoroughly esteem yourself of this year. I know no more of Lady Mary Pierrepoint than to admire at what I have heard of her, or be pleased with some fragments of hers, as I am with Sappho's. But now—I cannot say what I would say of you now. Only still give me cause to say you are good to me, and allow me as much of your person as Sir Godfrey can help me to. Upon conferring with him yesterday, I find he thinks it absolutely necessary to draw your face first, which, he says, can never be set right on your figure, if the drapery and posture be finished before. To give you as little trouble as possible, he purposes to draw your face with crayons, and finish it up at your own house of a morning; from whence he will transfer it to canvas, so that you need not go to sit at his house. This, I must observe, is a manner they seldom draw any but crowned heads, and I observe it with a secret pride and pleasure. Be so kind as to tell me if you care, he should do this to-morrow at twelve. Though, if I am but assured from you of the thing, let the manner and time be what you best like; let every decorum you please be observed. I should be very unworthy of any favor from your hands, if I desired any at the expense of your quiet or conveniency in any degree."

He was charmed with the picture, and composed an extemporary compliment, beginning

> The playful smiles around the dimpled mouth,
> That happy air of majesty and truth, &c.

which considering that they are Pope's, are strangely defective in rhyme, in sense, and in grammar. In a far different strain are the beautiful lines addressed to Gay during Lady Mary's absence from Twickenham, and which he afterwards endeavored to suppress. They are curious on this account, as well as for being the solitary example of amatory verse contained in his works.

> Ah friend! 'tis true,—this truth you lovers know,
> In vain my structures rise, my gardens grow;
> In vain fair Thames reflects the double scenes,
> Of hanging mountains, and of sloping greens;
> Joy lives not here, to happier seats it flies,
> And only dwells where Wortley casts her eyes.
>
> What are the gay parterre, the checkered shade,
> The morning bower, the evening colonnade,
> But soft recesses of uneasy minds,
> To sigh unheard in to the passing winds?
> So the struck deer, in some sequester'd part,
> Lies down to die, the arrow at his heart;
> There, stretch'd unseen in coverts hid from day,
> Bleeds drop by drop, and pants his life away.

These sweet and musical lines, which fall on the ear with such a lulling harmony, are dashed with discord when we remember that the same woman who inspired them, was afterwards malignantly and coarsely designated as the Sappho of his satires. The generous heart never coolly degraded and insulted what it has once loved; but Pope *could* not

be magnanimous,—it was not in his spiteful nature to forgive. He says of himself,

> Who'er offends, at some unlucky time
> Slides into verse, and hitches in a rhyme.*

One of Pope's biographers † seems to insinuate, that he had been led on, by the lady's coquetry, to presume too far, and in consequence received a repulse which he never forgave. This is not probable: Pope was not likely to be so desperate or dangerous an admirer; nor was Lady Mary, who had written with her diamond ring on a window,

> Let this great maxim be my virtue's guide:
> In part, she is to blame that has been tried,—
> He comes too near, that comes to be denied!—

at all likely to expose herself to such ridiculous audacity. The truth is, I rather imagine, that there was a great deal of vanity on both sides; that the lady was amused and flattered, and the poet bewitched and in earnest: that *she* gave the first offence by some pointed sarcasm or personal ridicule, in which she was an adept, and that Pope, gradually awakened from his dream of adoration, was stung to the

* "I have often wondered," says the gentle-spirited Cowper, "that the same poet who wrote the Dunciad should have written these lines,—

> That mercy I to others show,
> That mercy show to me!

Alas! for Pope, if the mercy he showed to others was the measure of the mercy he received!"—*Cowper's Letters*, vol. iii p. 195.

† Mr. Bowles.

quick by her laughing scorn, and mortified and irritated by the consciousness of his wasted attachment. He makes this confession with extreme bitterness,

> Yet soft by nature, more a dupe than wit,
> Sappho can tell you how this man was bit.
> *Prologue to the Satires.*

The lines as they stand in a first edition are even more pointed and significant, and have much more asperity.

> Once, and but once, his heedless youth was bit,
> And liked that dangerous thing, a female wit.
> Safe as he thought, though all the prudent chid,
> He wrote no libels, but *my lady* did;
> Great odds in amorous or poetic game,
> Where woman's is the *sin*, and man's the *shame!*

The result was a deadly and interminable feud. Lady Mary might possibly have inflicted the first private offence, but Pope gave the first public affront. A man who, under such circumstances, could grossly satirize a female, would, in a less civilized state of society, have revenged himself with a blow. The brutality and cowardice were the same.

The war of words did not, however, proceed at once to such extremity; the first indication of Pope's revolt from his sworn allegiance, and a conscious hint of the secret cause, may be found in some lines addressed to a lady poetess,* to whom he pays a compliment at Lady Mary's expense.

* Erinna: her real name is not known. But she was a friend of Lady Suffolk, who wrote bad verses, and submitted them to Pope for correction.

Though sprightly Sappho force our love and praise,
A softer wonder my pleased soul surveys,—
The mild Erinna blushing in her bays;
So while the sun's broad beam yet strikes the sight,
All mild appears the moon's more sober light.
Serene in virgin majesty she shines,
And unobserved, the glaring orb declines.

Soon after appeared that ribald and ruffianlike attack on her in the satires. She sent Lord Peterborough to remonstrate with Pope, to whom he denied the intended application; and his disavowal is a proved falsehood. Lady Mary, exasperated, forgot her good sense and her feminine dignity, and made common cause with Lord Hervey (the Lord Fanny and the Sporus of the Satires). They concocted an attack in verse, addressed to the imitator of Horace; but nothing could be more unequal than such a warfare. Pope, in return, grasped the blasting and volleyed lightnings of his wit, and would have annihilated both his adversaries, if more than half a grain of truth had been on his side. But posterity has been just: in his anger, he overcharged his weapon, it recoiled, and the engineer has been "hoisted by his own petard."

Lady Mary's personal negligence afforded grounds for Pope's coarse and severe allusions to the "color of her linen," &c. His asperity, however, did not reform her in this respect: it was a fault which increased with age and foreign habits. Horace Walpole, who met her at Florence twenty years afterwards, draws a hateful and disgusting

picture of her, as "old, dirty, tawdry, painted," and flirting and gambling with all the young men in the place. But Walpole is terribly satirical; he had a personal dislike to Lady Mary Wortley, whom he coarsely designates as *Moll Worthless*,—and his description is certainly overcharged. How differently the same characters will strike different people! Spence, who also met Lady Mary abroad, about that time, thus writes to his mother: "I always desired to be acquainted with Lady Mary, and could never bring it about, though we were so often together in London. Soon after we came to this place, her ladyship came here, and in five days I was well acquainted with her. She is one of the most shining characters in the world,—but shines like a comet: she is all irregularity, and always wandering: the most wise, most imprudent, loveliest, most disagreeable, best-natured, cruellest woman in the world!" Walpole could see nothing but her dirt and her paint. Those who recollect his coarse description, and do *not* remember her letters to her daughter, written from Italy about the same time, would do well to refer to them as a corrective: it is always so easy to be satirical and ill-natured, and sometimes so difficult to be just and merciful!

The cold scornful levity with which she treated certain topics, is mingled with touches of tenderness and profound thought, which show her to have been a disappointed, not a heartless woman. The extreme care with which she cultivated pleasurable

feelings and ideas, and shrunk from all disagreeable impressions; her determination never to view her own face in a glass, after the approach of age, or to pronounce the name of her mad, profligate son, may be referred to a cause very different from either selfishness or vanity: but I think the principle was mistaken. While she was amusing herself with her silk-worms and orangerie at Como, her husband Wortley, with whom she kept up a constant correspondence, was hoarding money and drinking tokay to keep himself alive. He died, however, in 1761; and that he was connected with the motives, whatever those were, which induced Lady Mary to reside abroad is proved by the fact, that the moment she heard of his death she prepared to return to England, and she reached London in January, 1762. "Lady Mary is arrived," says Walpole, writing to George Montagu. "I have seen her. I think her avarice, her dirt, and her vivacity, are all increased. Her dress, like her language, is a galimatias of several countries. She needs no cap, no handkerchief, no gown, no petticoat, no shoes; an old black-laced hood represents the first; the fur of a horseman's coat, which replaces the third, serves for the second; a dimity petticoat is deputy, and officiates for the fourth; and slippers act the part of the last." About six months after her arrival she died in the arms of her daughter, the Countess of Bute, of a cruel and shocking disease, the agonies of which she had borne with heroism rather than resignation. The

present Marquess of Bute, and the present Lord Wharncliffe, are the great-grandsons of this distinguished woman: the latter is the representative of the Wortley family.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

POETICAL OLD BACHELORS.

THERE is a certain class of poets, not a very numerous one, whom I would call poetical old bachelors. They are such as enjoy a certain degree of fame and popularity themselves, without sharing their celebrity with any fair piece of excellence; but walk each on his solitary path to glory, wearing their lonely honors with more dignity than grace: for instance, Corneille, Racine, Boileau, the classical names of French poetry, were all poetical old bachelors. Racine—*le tendre Racine*—as he is called *par excellence*, is said never to have been in love in his life; nor has he left us a single verse in which any of his personal feelings can be traced. He was, however, the kind and faithful husband of a cold, bigoted woman, who was persuaded, and at length persuaded *him*, that he would be *grillé* in the other world, for writing heathen tragedies in this: and made it her boast that she had never read

a single line of her husband's works! Peace be with her!

> And O, let her by whom the muse was scorn'd,
> Alive nor dead, be of the muse adorn'd!

Our own Gray was in every sense, real and poetical, a cold fastidious old bachelor, who buried himself in the recesses of his college; at once shy and proud, sensitive and selfish. I cannot, on looking through his memoirs, letters, and poems, discover the slightest trace of passion, or one proof or even indication that he was ever under the influence of woman. He loved his mother, and was dutiful to two tiresome old aunts, who thought poetry one of the seven deadly sins—*et voilà tout.* He spent his life in amassing an inconceivable quantity of knowledge, which lay as buried and useless as a miser's treasure; but with this difference, that when the miser dies, his wealth flows forth into its natural channels, and enriches others; Gray's learning was entombed with him: his genius survives in his elegy and his odes;—what became of his heart I know not. He is generally supposed to have possessed one, though none can guess what he did with it:—he might well moralize on his bachelorship, and call himself "a solitary fly,"—

> The joys no glittering female meets,
> No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets,
> No painted plumage to display!

Collins was never a lover, and never married.

His odes, with all their exquisite fancy and splendid imagery, have not much interest in their subjects, and no pathos derived from feeling or passion. He is reported to have been once in love; and as the lady was a day older than himself, he used to say jestingly, that "he came into the world *a day after the fair*." He was not deeply smitten; and though he led in his early years a dissipated life, his heart never seems to have been really touched. He wrote an Ode on the Passions, in which, after dwelling on Hope, Fear, Anger, Despair, Pity, and describing them with many picturesque circumstances, he dismisses Love with a couple of lines, as dancing to the sound of the sprightly viol, and forming with joy the light fantastic round. Such was Collins's idea of love!

To these we may add Goldsmith. Of his loves we know nothing; they were probably the reverse of poetical, and may have had some influence on his purse and respectability, but none on his literary character and productions. He also died unmarried.

Shenstone, if he was not a poetical old bachelor, was little better than a poetical dangler. He was not formed to captivate: his person was clumsy, his manners disagreeable, and his temper feeble and vacillating. The Delia who is introduced into his elegies, and the Phillis of his pastoral ballad, was Charlotte Graves, sister to the Graves who wrote the Spiritual Quixotte. There was nothing warm or earnest in his admiration, and all his gal-

lantry is as vapid as his character. He never gave the lady who was supposed, and supposed herself, to be the object of his serious pursuit, an opportunity of accepting or rejecting him; and his conduct has been blamed as ambiguous and unmanly. His querulous declamations against women in general, had neither cause nor excuse; and his complaints of infidelity and coldness are equally without foundation. He died unmarried.

When we look at a picture of Thomson, we wonder how a man with that heavy, pampered countenance, and awkward mien, could ever have written "The Seasons," or have been in love. I think it is Barry Cornwall, who says, strikingly, that Thomson's figure "was a personification of the Castle of Indolence, without its romance." Yet Thomson, though he has not given any popularity or interest to the name of a woman, is said to have been twice in love, after his own *lack-a-daisical* fashion. He was first attached to Miss Stanley, who died young, and upon whom he wrote the little elegy,—

Tell me, thou soul of her I love! &c.

He alludes to her also in Summer, in the passage beginning,—

And art thou, Stanley, of the sacred band? &c.

His second love was long, quiet, and constant; but whether the lady's coldness, or want of fortune, prevented a union, is not clear: probably the latter. The object of this attachment was a Miss

Young, who resided at Richmond; and his attentions to her were continued through a long series of years, and even till within a short time before his death, in his forty-eighth year. She was his Amanda; and if she at all answered the description of her in his Spring, she must have been a lovely and amiable woman.

> And thou, Amanda, come, pride of my song!
> Form'd by the Graces, loveliness itself!
> Come with those downcast eyes, sedate and sweet,
> Those looks demure, that deeply pierce the soul,
> Where, with the light of thoughtful reason mix'd,
> Shines lively fancy and the feeling heart:
> O, come! and while the rosy-footed May
> Steals blushing on, together let us tread
> The morning dews, and gather in their prime
> Fresh-blooming flowers, to grace thy braided hair.

And if his attachment to her suggested that beautiful description of domestic happiness with which his Spring concludes,—

> But happy they, the happiest of their kind,
> Whom gentler stars unite, &c.

who would not grieve at the destiny which denied to Thomson pleasures he could so eloquently describe, and so feelingly appreciate?

Truth, however, obliges me to add one little trait. A lady who did not know Thomson personally, but was enchanted with his "Seasons," said she could gather from his works three parts of his character, —that he was an amiable lover, an excellent swim-

mer, and extremely abstemious. Savage, who knew the poet, could not help laughing at this picture of a man who scarcely knew what love was; who shrunk from cold water like a cat; and whose habits were those of a good-natured bon vivant, who indulged himself in every possible luxury, which could be attained without trouble! He also died unmarried.

Hammond, the favorite of our sentimental great-grandmothers, whose "Love Elegies" lay on the toilettes of the Harriet Bryons and Sophia Westerns of the last century, was an amiable youth, "very melancholy and gentlemanlike," who being appointed equerry to Prince Frederic, cast his eyes on Miss Dashwood, bedchamber woman to the Princess, and she became his Delia. The lady was deaf to his pastoral strains; and though it has been said that she rejected him on account of the smallness of his fortune, I do not see the necessity of believing this assertion, or of sympathizing in the dull invectives and monotonous lamentations of the slighted lover. Miss Dashwood never married, and was, I believe, one of the maids of honor to the late Queen.

Thus the six poets, who, in the history of our literature, fill up the period which intervened between the death of Pope and the first publications of Burns and Cowper—all died old bachelors!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FRENCH POETS.

VOLTAIRE AND MADAME DU CHÂTELET.

If we take a rapid view of French literature, from the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, down to the Revolution, we are dazzled by the record of brilliant and celebrated women, who protected or cultivated letters, and obtained the homage of men of talent. There was Ninon; and there was Madame de Rambouillet; the one *galante*, the other *précieuse*. One had her St. Evremond; the other her Voiture. Madame de Sablière protected La Fontaine; Madame de Montespan protected Molière; Madame de Maintenon protected Racine. It was all patronage and protection on one side, and dependence and servility on the other. Then we have the *intrigante* Madame de Tencin; * the good-natured, but rather *bornée* Madame de Géoffrin; the Duchesse de Maine, who held a little court of *bel esprits* and small poets at Sceaux, and is best known as the patroness of Mademoiselle de Lau-

* Madame de Tencin used to call the men of letters she assembled at her house "mes bêtes," and her society went by the name of Madame de Tencin's ménagerie. Her advice to Marmontel, when a young man, was excellent. See his Memoirs, vol. i

nay. Madame d'Epinay, the *amie* of Grimm, and the patroness of Rousseau; the clever, selfish, witty, ever *ennuyée*, never *ennuyeuse* Madame du Deffand; the ardent, talented Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, who would certainly have been a poetess, if she had not been a philosopheress and a Frenchwoman: Madame Neckar, the patroness of Marmontel and Thomas:—*e tutte quante.* If we look over the light French literature of those times, we find an inconceivable heap of *vers galans*, and *jolis couplets*, licentious songs, pretty, well-turned compliments, and most graceful badinage; but we can discover the names of only two distinguished women, who have the slightest pretensions to a poetical celebrity, derived from the genius, the attachment, and the fame of their lovers. These were Madame du Châtelet, Voltaire's "Immortelle Emilie:" and Madame d'Houdetot, the Doris of Saint Lambert.

Gabrielle-Emilie le Tonnelier de Bréteuil, was the daughter of the Baron de Bréteuil, and born in 1706. At an early age she was taken from her convent, and married to the Marquis du Châtelet; and her life seems thenceforward to have been divided between two passions, or rather two pursuits rarely combined,—love, and geometry. Her tutor in both is said to have been the famous mathematician Clairaut; and between them they rendered geometry so much the fashion at one time, that all the women, who were distinguished either for rank or beauty, thought it indispensable to have a

geometrician in their train. The "Poëtes de Société" hid for awhile their diminished heads, or were obliged to study geometry *pour se mettre à la mode.** Her friendship with Voltaire began to take a serious aspect, when she was about eight-and-twenty, and he was about forty; he is said to have succeeded that *roué par excellence*, the Duc de Richelieu, in her favor.

This woman might have dealt in mathematics,—might have inked her fingers with writing treatises on the Newtonian philosophy; she might have sat up till five in the morning, solving problems and calculating eclipses;—and yet have possessed amiable, elevated, generous, and attractive qualities, which would have thrown a poetical interest round her character; moreover, considering the horribly corrupt state of French society at that time, she might have been pardoned "une vertu de moins," if her power over a great genius had been exercised to some good purpose;—to restrain his licentiousness, to soften his pungent and merciless satire, and prevent the frequent prostitution of his admirable and versatile talents. But a female skeptic, profligate from temperament and principle; a termagant, "qui voulait furieusement tout ce qu'elle voulait;" a woman with all the *suffisance* of a pedant, and all the *exigence*, caprices, and frivolity of a fine lady,—*grands dieux!* what a heroine for poetry!

* Correspondence de Grimm, vol. ii. 421.

To a taste for Newton and the stars, and geometry and algebra, Madame du Châtelet added some other tastes not quite so sublime;—a great taste for bijoux—and pretty gimcracks—and old china—and watches—and rings—and diamonds—and snuff-boxes—and—puppet-shows!* and, now and then, *une petite affaire du cœur*, by way of variety.

> Tout lui plait, tout convient à son vaste genie:
> Les livres, les bijoux, les compas, les pompons,
> Les vers, les diamants, le biribi,† l'optique,
> L'algèbre, les soupers, le latin, les jupons,
> L'opéra, les procès, le bal, et la physique!

This "Minerve de la France, la respectable Emilie," did not resemble Minerva in *all* her attributes; nor was she satisfied with a *succession* of lovers. The whole history of her *liaison* with Voltaire, is enough to put *en déroute* all poetry, and all sentiment. With her imperious temper and bitter tongue, and his extreme irritability, no wonder they should have *des scènes terribles.*‡ Marmontel says they were often *à couteaux tirés;* and this, not metaphorically but literally. On one

* Je ris plus que personne aux marionettes; et j'avoue qu' une boite, une porcelaine, un meuble nouveau, sont pour moi une vraie jouissance.—*Œuvres de Madame du Châtelet—Traité de Bonheur.*

† The then fashionable game at cards.

‡Voltaire once said of her, " C'est une femme terrible, qui n'a point de flexibilité dans le cœur, quoiqu'elle l'ait bon " This hardness of temper, this *volonté tyrannique*, this cold determination never to yield a point, were worse than all her violence.

occasion, Voltaire happened to criticize some couplets she had written for Madame de Luxembourg. "L'Amante de Newton"* could calculate eclipses, but she could not make verses; and, probably, for that reason, she was most particularly jealous of all censure, while she criticized Voltaire without manners or mercy; and he endured it, sometimes with marvellous patience.

A dispute was now the consequence; both became furious; and at length Voltaire snatched up a knife, and brandishing it exclaimed, "ne me regarde donc pas avec tes yeux hagards et louches!" After such a scene as this, one would imagine that Love must have spread his light wings and fled forever. Could Emilie ever have forgiven those words, or Voltaire have forgotten the look that provoked them?

But the *mobilité* of his mind was one of the most extraordinary parts of his character, and he was not more irascible than he was easily appeased. Madame du Châtelet maintained her power over him for twenty years; during five of which they resided in her chateau at Cirey, under the countenance of her husband; he was a good sort of man, but seems to have been considered by these two geniuses and their guests as a complete nonentity. He was "*Le bon-homme, le vilain petit Tricheteau*," whom it was a task to speak to, and a penance to amuse. Every day, after coffee, Monsieur rose from his table with all the docility imaginable, leaving Vol-

* The title which Voltaire gave her.

taire and Madame to recite verses, translate Newton, philosophize, dispute, and to do the honors of Cirey to the brilliant society who had assembled under his roof.

While the boudoir, the laboratory, and the sleeping room of the lady, and the study and gallery appropriated to Voltaire, were furnished with Oriental luxury and splendor, and shone with gilding, drapery, pictures, and baubles, the lord of the mansion and the guests were destined to starve in half-furnished apartments, from which the wind and the rain were scarcely excluded.*

In 1748, Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet paid a visit to the Court of Stanislaus, the ex-king of Poland, at Luneville, and took M. du Châtelet in their train. There Madame du Châtelet was seized with a passion for Saint Lambert, the author of the "Saisons," who was at least ten or twelve years younger then herself, and then a *jeune militaire*, only admired for his fine figure and pretty *vers de société*. Voltaire, it is said, was extremely jealous; but his jealousy did not prevent him from addressing some very elegant verses to his handsome rival, in which he compliments him gaily on the good graces of the lady.

> Saint Lambert, ce n'est que pour toi
> Que ces belles fleurs sont écloses,

* "Vie privée de Voltaire et de Madame du Châtelet," in a series of letters, written by Madame de Graffigny during her stay at Cirey. The details in these letters are exceedingly amusing, but the style so diffuse, that it is scarcely possible to make extracts.

C'est ta main qui cueille les roses,
Et les épines sont pour moi! *

Some months afterwards, Madame du Châtelet died in childbirth, in her forty-fourth year.

Voltaire was so overwhelmed by this loss, that he set off for Paris immediately *pour se dissiper.* Marmontel has given us a most ludicrous account of a visit of condolence he paid him on this occasion. He found Voltaire absolutely drowned in tears; at every fresh burst of sorrow, he called on Marmontel to sympathize with him. "Helas! j'ai perdu mon illustre amie! Ah! ah! je suis au désespoir!"—Then exclaiming against Saint Lambert, whom he accused as the cause of the catastrophe—"Ah! mon ami! il me l'a tuée, le brutal!" while Marmontel, who had often heard him abuse his "*sublime* Emilie" in no measured terms, as "une furie, attachée à ses pas," hid his face with his handkerchief in pretended sympathy, but in reality to conceal his irrepressible smiles. In the midst of this scene of despair, some ridiculous idea or story striking Voltaire's vivid fancy, threw him into fits of laughter, and some time elapsed before he recollected that he was inconsolable.

The death of Madame du Châtelet, the circumstances which attended it, and the celebrity of herself and her lover, combined to cause a great *sensation.* No elegies indeed appeared on the occasion,—"no tears eternal that embalm the dead;"

* Épître à Saint Lambert.

but a shower of epigrams and *bon mots*—some exquisitely witty and malicious. The story of her ring, in which Voltaire and her husband each expected to find his own portrait, and which on being opened, was found, to the utter discomfiture of both, to contain that of Saint Lambert, is well known.

If we may judge from her picture, Madame du Châtelet must have been extremely pretty. Her eyes were fine and piercing; her features delicate, with a good deal of *finesse* and intelligence in their expression. But her countenance, like her character, was devoid of interest. She had great power of mental abstraction; and on one occasion she went through a most complicated calculation of figures in her head, while she played and won a game at piquet. She *could* be graceful and fascinating, but her manners were, in general, extremely disagreeable; and her parade of learning, her affectation, her egotism, her utter disregard of the comforts, feelings, and opinions of others, are well portrayed in two or three brilliant strokes of sarcasm from the pen of Madame de Staël.* She even turns her philosophy into ridicule. "Elle fait actuellement la revue de ses Principes;† c'est un exercise qu'elle réitère chaque année, sans quoi ils pourroient s'échapper; et peut-être s'en aller si loin qu'elle n'en retrouverait pas un seul. Je crois

* Madlle de Launay: it has become necessary to distinguish between two celebrated women bearing the same name, at least in sound.

† "Les principes de la philosophie de Newton."

bien que sa tête est pour eux une maison de force, et non pas le lieu de leur naissance." *

That Madame du Châtelet was a woman of extraordinary talent, and that her progress in abstract sciences was uncommon, and even *unique* at that time, at least among her own sex, is beyond a doubt; but her learned treatises on Newton, and the nature of fire, are now utterly forgotten. We have since had a Mrs. Marcet; and we have read of Gaetana Agnesi, who was professor of mathematics in the University of Padua; two women who, uniting to the rarest philosophical acquirements, gentleness and virtue, have needed no poet to immortalize them.

Of the numerous poems which Voltaire addressed to Madame du Châtelet the Epistle beginning

* V. Correspondence de Madame de Deffand. In another letter from Sçeaux, Madame de Staël adds the following clever, satirical, —but most characteristic picture:—

"En tout cas on vous garde un bon appartement: c'est celui dont Madame du Châtelet, après une revue exacte de toute la maison, s'était emparée. Il y aura un peu moins de meubles qu'elle n'y en avait mis; car elle avait dévasté tous ceux par où elle avait passé pour garnir celui-là. On y a trouvé six ou sept tables; il lui en faut de toutes les grandeurs; d'immenses pour étaler ses papiers, de solides pour soutenir son nécessaire, de plus légères pour ses pompons, pour ses bijoux; et cette belle ordonnance ne l'a pas garantie d'un accident pareil à celui qui arrive à Phillippe II. quand, après avoir passé la nuit à écrire, on répandit une bouteille d'encre sur ses dépêches. La dame ne s'est pas piquée d'imiter la modération de ce prince; aussi n'avait-il écrit que sur des affaires d'état; et ce qu'on lui a barbouillé, c'était de l'algèbre, bien plus difficile à remettre au net."

Tu m'appelles à toi, vaste et puissant génie,
Minerve de la France, immortelle Emilie,

is a *chef-d'œuvre*, and contains some of the finest lines he ever wrote. The Epistle to her on calumny, written to console her for the abuse and ridicule which her abstractions and indiscretions had provoked, begins with these beautiful lines—

Écoutez-moi, respectable Emilie:
Vous êtes belle; ainsi donc la moitié
Du genre humain sera votre ennemie:
Vous possédez un sublime génie;
On vous craindra; votre tendre amitié
Est confiante; et vous serez trahie:
Votre vertu dans sa démarche unie,
Simple et sans fard, n'a point sacrifié
À nos dévots; craignez la calomnie.

With that famous ring, from which he had afterwards the mortification to discover that his own portrait had been banished to make room for that of Saint Lambert, he sent her this elegant *quatrain*.

Barier grava ces traits distinés pour vos yeux;
Avec quelque plaisir daignez les reconnoitre:
Les vôtres dans mon cœur furent gravés bien mieux,
Mais ce fut par un plus grand maitre.

The heroine of the famous Epistle, known as "Les TU et les VOUS," (Madame de Gouverné,) was one of Voltaire's earliest loves; and he was passionately attached to her. They were separated

in the world:—she went through the usual ***routine*** of a French woman's existence,—I mean, of a French woman *l'ancien régime*.

> Quelques plaisirs dans la jeunesse,
> Des soins dans la maternité,
> Tous les malheurs dans la vieillesse,
> Puis la peur de l'éternité.

She was first dissipated; then an *esprit fort*, then *très dévote*. In obedience to her confessor, she discarded, one after the other, her rouge, her ribbons, and the presents and billets-doux of her lovers; but no remonstrances could induce her to give up Voltaire's picture. When he returned from exile in 1778, he went to pay a visit to his old love; they had not met for fifty years, and they now gazed on each other in silent dismay. *He* looked, I suppose, like the dried mummy of an ape: *she*, like a withered *sorcière*. The same evening she sent him back his portrait, which she had hitherto refused to part with. Nothing remained to shed illusion over the past; she had beheld, even before the last terrible proof—

> What dust we doat on, when 'tis man we love.

And Voltaire, on his side, was not less dismayed by his visit. On returning from her, he exclaimed, with a shrug of mingled disgust and horror, "Ah, mes amis! je viens de passer à l'autre bord du Cocyte!" It was not thus that Cowper felt for his

Mary, when "her auburn locks were changed to gray:" but it is almost an insult to the memory of true tenderness to mention them both in the same page.

To enumerate other women who have been celebrated by Voltaire, would be to give a list of all the beautiful and distinguished women of France for half a century; from the Duchesse de Richelieu and Madame de Luxembourg, down to Camargo the dancer, and Clairon and le Couvreur the actresses: but I can find no name of any *poetical* fame or interest among them: nor can I conceive any thing more revolting than the history of French society and manners during the Regency and the whole of the reign of Louis the Fifteenth.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FRENCH POETRY, CONTINUED.

MADAME D'HOUDETOT.

SAINT LAMBERT, who seemed destined to rival greater men than himself, after carrying off Madame du Châtelet from Voltaire, became the favored lover of the Comtesse d'Houdetot, Rousseau's Sophie; she for whom the philosopher first felt love,

"*dans toute son énergie, toutes ses fureurs*,"—but in vain.

Saint Lambert is allowed to be an elegant poet: his *Saisons* were once as popular in France, as Thomson's Seasons are here; but they have not retained their popularity. The French poem, though in many parts imitated from the English, is as unlike it as possible: correct, polished, elegant, full of beautiful lines,—of what the French call *de beaux vers*,—and yet excessively dull. It is equally impossible to find fault with it in parts, or endure it as a whole. *Une petite pointe de verve* would have rendered it delightful; but the total want of enthusiasm in the writer freezes the reader. As Madame du Deffand said, in humorous mockery of his monotonous harmony, "Sans les oiseaux, les ruisseaux, les hameaux, les ormeaux, et leur rameaux, il aurait bien peu de choses à dire!"

Madame d'Houdetot was the *Doris* to whom the Seasons are dedicated: and the opening passage addressed to her, is extremely admired by French critics.

Et toi, qui m'as choisi pour embellir ma vie,
Doux repos de mon cœur, aimable et tendre amie!
Toi, qui sais de nos champs admirer les beautés:
Dérobe-toi, Doris! au luxe des cités,
Aux arts dont tu jouis, au monde où tu sais plaire;
Le printemps te rappelle au vallon solitaire;
Heureux si près de toi je chante à son retour,
Ses dons et ses plaisirs, la campagne et l'amour!

Sophie de la Briche, afterwards Madame d'Hou-

detot, was the daughter of a rich *fermier général;* and destined, of course, to a marriage de convenance, she was united very young to the Comte d'Houdetot, an officer of rank in the army; a man who was allowed by his friends to be *très peu amiable*, and whom Madame d'Epinay, who hated him, called *vilain* and *insupportable*. He was too good-natured to make his wife absolutely miserable, but *un bonheur à faire mourir d'ennui*, was not exactly adapted to the disposition of Sophie; and there was no principle within, no restraint without, no support, no counsel, no example, to guide her conduct or guard her against temptation.

The power by which Madame d'Houdetot captivated the gay, handsome, dissipated Saint Lambert, and kindled into a blaze the passions or the imagination of Rousseau, was not that of beauty. Her face was plain and slightly marked with the smallpox; her eyes were not good; she was extremely short-sighted, which gave to her countenance and address an appearance of uncertainty and timidity; her figure was *mignonne*, and in all her movements there was an indescribable mixture of grace and awkwardness. The charm by which this woman seized and kept the hearts, not of lovers only, but of friends, was a character the very reverse of that of Madame du Châtelet, who would have deemed it an insult to be compared to her either in mind or beauty:—the absence of all *pretension*, all coquetry; the total surrender of her own feelings, thoughts, interests, where another

was concerned; the frankness which verged on giddiness and imprudence; the temper which nothing could ruffle; the warm kindness which nothing could chill; the bounding spirit of gayety, which nothing could subdue,—these qualities rendered Madame d'Houdetot an attaching and interesting creature, to the latest moment of her long life. "Mon Dieu! que j'ai d'impatience de voir dix ans de plus sur la tête de cette femme!" exclaimed her sister-in-law, Madame d'Epinay, when she saw her at the age of twenty. But at the age of eighty, Madame d'Houdetot was just as much a child as ever,—"aussi vive, aussi enfant, aussi gaie, aussi distraite, aussi bonne et très bonne;"* in spite of wrinkles, sorrows, and frailties, she retained, in extreme old age, the gayety, the tenderness, the confiding simplicity, though not the innocence of early youth.

Her *liaison* with Saint Lambert continued fifty years, nor was she ever suspected of any other indiscretion. During this time he contrived to make her as wretched as a woman of her disposition could be made; and the elasticity of her spirits did not prevent her from being acutely sensible to pain, and alive to unkindness. Saint Lambert, from being her lover, became her tyrant. He behaved with a peevish jealousy, a petulance, a bitterness, which sometimes drove her beyond the bounds of a woman's patience; and whenever this happened, the accommodating husband, M. d'Hou-

* Mémoires et Lettres de Madame d'Epinay, tom. i. p. 95.

detot, would interfere to reconcile the lovers, and plead for the recall of the offender.

When Saint Lambert's health became utterly broken, she watched over him with a patient tenderness, unwearied by all his *exigence*, and unprovoked by his detestable temper; he had a house near hers in the valley of Montmorenci, and lived on perfectly good terms with her husband. I must add one trait, which, however absurd, and scarcely credible, it may sound in our sober, English ears, is yet true. M. and Madame d'Houdetot gave a fête at Eaubonne, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of their marriage. Sophie was then nearly *seventy*, but played her part, as the heroine of the day, with all the grace and vivacity of seventeen. On this occasion, the lover and the husband chose, for the first time in their lives, to be jealous of each other, and exhibited, to the amusement and astonishment of the guests, a *scene*, which was for some time the talk of all Paris.

Saint Lambert died in 1805. After his death, Madame d'Houdetot was seized with sentimental *tendresse* for M. Somariva,* and continued to send him bouquets and billets-doux to the end of her life. She died about 1815.

To her singular power of charming, Madame d'Houdetot added talents of no common order, which, though never cultivated with any perse-

* M. Somariva is well known to all who have visited Paris, for his fine collection of pictures, and particularly as the possessor of Canova's famous Magdalen.

verance, now and then displayed, or rather *disclosed* themselves unexpectedly, adding surprise to pleasure. She was a musician, a poetess, a wit;—but every thing, "par la grâce de Dieu,"—and as if unconsciously and involuntarily. All Saint Lambert's poetry together is not worth the little song she composed for him on his departure for the army:—

L'Amant que j'adore,
Prêt à me quitter,
D'un instant encore
Voudrait profiter:
Félicité vaine!
Qu'on ne peut saisir,
Trop près de la peine
Pour être un plaisir!*

It is to Madame d'Houdetot that Lord Byron alludes in a striking passage of the third canto of Childe Harold, beginning

Here the self-torturing sophist, wild Rousseau, † &c.

And *apropos* to Rousseau, I shall merely observe that there is, and can be but one opinion with regard to his conduct in the affair of Madame d'Houdetot: it was abominable. She thought, as every one who ever was connected with that man, found sooner or later, that he was all made up of genius and imagination, and as destitute of heart as of

* See Lady Morgan's France, and the Biographie Universelle.
† Stanza 77, and more particularly stanza 79.

moral principle. I can never think of his character, but as of something at once admirable, portentous, and shocking; the most great, most gifted, most wretched;—worst, meanest, maddest of mankind!

* * * *

Madame du Châtelet and Madame d'Houdetot must for the present be deemed sufficient specimens of French poetical heroines; it were easy to pursue the subject farther, but it would lead to a field of discussion and illustration, which I would rather decline.*

Is it not singular that in a country which was the cradle, if not the birthplace of modern poetry and romance, the language, the literature, and the women, should be so essentially and incurably *prosaic?* The muse of French poetry never swept a lyre; she grinds a barrel-organ in her serious moods, and she scrapes a fiddle in her lively ones; and as for the distinguished Frenchwomen, whose memory and whose characters are blended with the literature, and connected with the great names of their country,—they are often admirable, and

* In one of Madame de Genlis's prettiest Tales—"Les préventions d'une femme," there is the following observation, as full of truth as of feminine propriety. I trust that the principle it inculcates has been kept in view through the whole of this little work.

"Il y a plus de pudeur et de dignité dans la douce indulgence qui semble ignorer les anecdotes scandaleuses ou du moins, les révoquer en doute, que dans le dédain qui en retrace le souvenir, et qui s'érige publiquement en juge inflexible."

sometimes interesting; but with all their fascinations, their charms, their *esprit*, their graces, their *amabilité* and their *sensibilité*, it was not in the power of the gods or their lovers to make them *poetical*.

CONCLUSION.

HEROINES OF MODERN POETRY.

Heureuse la Beauté que le poete adore!
Heureux le nom qu'il a chanté!—De Lamartine.

It will be allowed, I think, that women have reason to be satisfied with the rank they hold in modern poetry; and that the homage which has been addressed to them, either directly and individually, or paid indirectly and generally, in the beautiful characters and portraits drawn of them, ought to satisfy equally female sentiment and female vanity. From the half ethereal forms which float amid moonbeams and gems, and odors and flowers, along the dazzling pages of Lalla Rookh, down to Phœbe Dawson, in the Parish Register:* from that loveliest gem of polished life, the young Aurora of Lord Byron, down to Wordsworth's poor Margaret weeping in her deserted cottage;† all the various aspects between these wide extremes

* Crabbe's Poems. † See the Excursion.

of character and situation, under which we have been exhibited, have been, with few exceptions, just and favorable to our sex.

In the literature of the classical ages, we were debased into mere servants of pleasure, alternately the objects of loose incense or coarse invective. In the poetry of the Gothic ages, we all rank as queens. In the succeeding period, when the Platonic philosophy was oddly mixed up with the institutions of chivalry, we were exalted into divinities;—"angels called, and angel-like adored." Then followed the age of French gallantry, tinged with classical elegance, and tainted with classical license, when we were caressed, complimented, wooed and satirized by coxcomb poets,

> Who ever mix'd their song with light licentious toys.

There was much expenditure of wit and of talent, but in an ill cause;—for the feeling was, *au fond*, bad and false;—"et il n'est guère plaisant d'être empoisonné, même par l'esprit de rose."

In the present time a better spirit prevails. We are not indeed sublimated into goddesses; but neither is it the fashion to degrade us into the playthings of fopling poets. We seem to have found, at length, our proper level in poetry, as in society; and take the place assigned to us as women—

> As creatures not too bright or good,
> For human nature's daily food;

For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles!*

We are represented as ruling by our feminine attractions, moral or exterior, the passions and imaginations of men; as claiming, by our weakness, our delicacy, our devotion,—their protection, their tenderness, and their gratitude: and since the minds of women have been more generally and highly cultivated; since a Madame de Staël, a Joanna Baillie, a Maria Edgeworth, and a hundred other names, now shining aloft like stars, have shed a reflected glory on the whole sex they belong to, we possess through them, a claim to admiration and respect for our mental capabilities. We assume the right of passing judgment on the poetical homage addressed to us, and our smiles alone can consecrate what our smiles first inspired.†

If we look over the mass of poetry produced during the last twenty-five years, whether Italian, French, German, or English, we shall find that the predominant feeling is honorable to women, and if not gallantry, is something better.‡ It is too true, that the incense has not been always perfectly pure. "Many light lays,—ah, wo is me there-

* Wordsworth.

† Even so the smile of woman stamps our fates,
And consecrates the love it first creates!

Barry Cornwall.

‡ See in particular Schiller's ode, "Honor to Women," one of the most elegant tributes ever paid to us by a poet's enthusiasm. It may be found translated in Lord F. Gower's beautiful little volume of Miscellanies.

fore!"* have sounded from one gifted lyre, which has since been strung to songs of patriotism and tenderness. Moore, whom I am proud, for a thousand reasons, to claim as my countryman, began his literary and amatory career, fresh from the study of the classics, and the poets of Charles the Second's time; and too often through the thin undress of superficial refinement, we trace the grossness of his models. It is said, I know not how truly, that he has since made the *amende honorable*. He has possibly discovered, that women of sense and sentiment, who have a true feeling of what is due to them as women, are not fitly addressed in the style of Anacreon and Catullus; have no sympathies with his equivocal Rosas, Fanny, and Julias, and are not flattered by being associated with tavern orgies and bumpers of wine, and such "tipsy revelry." Into themes like these he has, it is true, infused a buoyant spirit of gayety, a tone of sentiment, and touches of tender and moral feeling, which would reconcile us to them, if any thing could; as in the beautiful songs, "When time, who steals our years away,"—"O think not my spirits are always as light,"—"Farewell! but whenever you think on the hour,"—"The Legacy," and a hundred others. But how many *more* are there, in which the purity

* Many light lays (ah! wo is me the more)
In praise of that mad fit which fools call *love*,
I have i' the heat of youth made heretofore,
That in light wits did loose affections move;
But all these follies do I now reprove, &c.
Spenser

and earnestness of the feeling vie with the grace and delicacy of the expression! and in the difficult art (only to be appreciated by a singer) of marrying verse to sound, Moore was never excelled—never equalled—but by Burns. He seems to be gifted, as poet and musician, with a double instinct of harmony, peculiar to himself.

Barry Cornwall is another living poet who has drunk deep from the classics and from our elder writers; but with a finer taste and a better feeling, he has borrowed only what was decorative, graceful and accessory: the pure stream of his sentiment flows unmingled and untainted,—

> Yet musical as when the waters run,
> Lapsing through sylvan haunts deliciously.*

It is not without reason that Barry Cornwall has been styled the "Poet of Woman," *par excellence.* It enhances the value, it adds to the charm of every tender and beautiful passage addressed to us, that we know them to be sincere and heartfelt,

> Not fable bred,
> But such as truest poets love to write.

It is for the sake of *one*, beloved "beyond ambition and the light of song,"—and worthy to be so loved, that he approaches *all* women with the most graceful, delicate, and reverential homage ever expressed in sweet poetry. His fancy is in-

* Marcian Colonna.

deed so luxuriant, that he makes whatever he touches appear fanciful: but the beauty adorned by his verse, and adorning his home, is not imaginary; and though he has almost hidden his divinity behind a cloud of incense, she is not therefore less *real*.

The life Lord Byron led was not calculated to give him a good opinion of women, or to place before him the best virtues of our sex. Of all modern poets, he has been the most generally popular among female readers; and he owes this enthusiam not certainly to our obligations to *him;* for, as far as women are concerned, we may designate his works by a line borrowed from himself,—

> With much to excite, there's little to exalt.

But who, like him, could administer to that "*besoin de sentir*," which I am afraid is an ingredient in the feminine character all over the world?

Lord Byron is really the Grand Turk of amatory poetry,—ardent in his love,—mean and merciless in his resentment: he could trace passion in characters of fire, but his caustic satire burns and blisters where it falls. Lovely as are some of his female portraits, and inimitably beautiful as are some of his lyrical effusions, it must be confessed there is something very Oriental in all his feelings and ideas about women; he seems to require nothing of us but beauty and submission. Please him—and he will crown you with the

richest flowers of poetry, and heap the treasures of the universe at your feet, as trophies of his love; but once offend him, and you are lost,—

> There yawns the sack—and yonder rolls the sea

Campbell, ever elegant and tender, has hymned us all into divinities and through his sweet and varied page,

> Where love pursues an ever devious race,
> True to the winding lineaments of grace,

we figure under every beautiful aspect that truth and feeling could inspire, or poetry depict.

Sir Walter Scott ought to have lived in the age of chivalry, (if we could endure the thoughts of his living in any other age but our own!) so touched with the true antique spirit of generous devotion to our sex are all his poetical portraits of women. I do not find that he has, like most other writers of the present day, mixed up his personal feelings and history with his poetry; or that any fair and distinguished object will be so thrice fortunate as to share his laurelled immortality. We must therefore treat him like Shakspeare, whom alone he resembles—and claim him for us all.

Then there is Rogers, whose compliments to us are so polished, so pointed, and so elegantly turned, and have such a drawing-room air, that they seem as if intended to be presented to Duchesses, by beaux in white kid gloves. And there is Coleridge

who approaches women with a sort of feeling half earthly half heavenly, like that with which an Italian devotee bends before his Madonna—

> And comes unto his courtship as his prayer.

And there is Southey, in whose imagination we are all heroines and queens; and Wordsworth, lost in the depths of his own tenderness!

* * * * *

The time is not yet arrived, when the loves of the living poets, or of those lately dead, can be discussed individually, or exhibited at full length. The subject is much too hazardous for a contemporary, and more particularly for a female to dwell upon. Such details belong properly to the next age, and there is no fear that these gossiping times will leave any thing a mystery for posterity. The next generation will be infinitely wiser on these interesting subjects than their grandmothers. Yet a few years, and what is scandal and personality *now*, will *then* be matter for biography and history. Then many a love, destined to rival that of Petrarch in purity and celebrity, and that of Tasso in interest, shall be divulged; the thread of many a poetical romance now coiled up in mystic verse, shall then be evolved. Then we shall know the true history of Lord Byron's "Fare thee well." We shall then know more than the mere name of his Mary,* who first kindled his boyish fancy, and

* Miss Chaworth, now Mrs. Musters.

left an ineffaceable impression on his young heart, and whose history is said to be shadowed forth in "The Dream." We may then know who was the heroine of "Remember him whom passion's power:" whose moonlight charms at once so radiant and so shadowy, inspired "She walks in beauty;" we shall be told, perhaps, who was the Thyrza, so loving and beloved in life, and whose early death, which appears to have taken place during his travels, is so deeply, so feelingly lamented: and who was his Ginevra,* and what spot of earth was made happy by her beautiful presence—if any thing so divinely beautiful ever was!

Then we shall not ask in vain who was Campbell's Caroline?† Whether she did, indeed, walk this earth in mortal beauty, or was not rather invoked by the poet's spell, from the soft evening star which shone upon her bower?

Then we shall know upon whose white bosom perished that rose,‡ which, dying, bequeathed with its odorous breath a tale of truest love to after-times, and glory to her, whose breast was its envied tomb—to *her*, whose heart has thrilled to the homage of her poet,—yet who would "*blush to find it fame!*"

Then we shall know who was the "Lucy,"

> Who dwelt among the untrodden ways,
> Beside the springs of Dove;§

*Lord Byron's Works, vol. iii. p. 183, (small edit.)

† Campbell's Poems, vol. ii. p. 202.

‡ Barry Cornwall's Poems, "Lines on a Rose."

§ Wordsworth's Poems, vol. i. p. 181.

and who was the heroine of that most exquisite picture of feminine loveliness in all the aspects, "She was a Phantom of delight." *—No phantom, it is said, but a fair reality :

> A being, breathing thoughtful breath,
> A traveller betwixt life and death,

yet fated not to die, while verse can live!

Then we shall know whose tear has been preserved by Rogers with a power beyond "the Chemist's magic art;" who was the lovely bride who is destined to blush and tremble in his Epithalamium, for a thousand years to come; and to what fair obdurate is addressed his "Farewell."

We may then learn who was that sweet Mary who adorned the cottage-home of Wilson; and who was the "Wild Louisa," of whom he has drawn such a captivating picture; first as the sprightly girl floating down the dance,

> With footsteps light as falling snow,

and afterwards as the matron and the mother, hanging over the cradle of her infant, and blessing him in his sleep.

Then we may *tell* who was the "Bonnie Jean," sung by Allan Cunningham, whose destructive charms are so pleasantly, so naturally touched upon.

> Sair she slights the lads—
> Three are like to die;
> Four in sorrow listed,—
> And five flew to sea!

* Wordsworth, vol. ii. p. 132.

This rural beauty, who caused such terrible devastation, and who it is said, first made a poet of her lover, became afterwards his wife; and in her matronly character, she inspired that beautiful little effusion of conjugal tenderness, "The Poet's Bridal Song." When first published, it was almost universally copied, and committed to memory; and Allan Cunningham may not only boast that he has woven a wreath "to grace his Jean,"

> While rivers flow and woods are green,

but that he has given the sweet wife, seated among her children in sedate and matronly loveliness, an interest even beyond that which belongs to the young girl he has described with raven locks and cheeks of cream, driving rustic admirers to despair, or lingering with her lover at eve,

> Amid the falling dew,
> When looks were fond, and words were few!

Such is the charm of affection, and truth, and moral feeling, carried straight into the heart by poetry!

What a new interest and charm will be given to many of Moore's beautiful songs, when we are allowed to trace the feeling that inspired them, whether derived from some immediate and present impression; or from remembered emotion, that sometimes swells in the breast, like the heaving of the waves, when the winds are still! Several of

the most charming of his lyrics are said to be inspired by "the heart so warm, and eyes so bright," which first taught him the value of domestic happiness;—taught him that the true poet need not rove abroad for themes of song, but may kindle his genius at the flame which glows on his own hearth, and make the Muses his household goddesses.*

Gifford, the late editor of the Quarterly Review, and the author of the Baviad and Mæviad, was in early youth doomed to struggle with poverty, obscurity, ill-health, and every hardship which could check the rise of genius. He has himself described the effect produced on his mind, under these circumstances, by his attachment to an amiable and gentle girl. "I crept on," he says, "in silent discontent, unfriended and unpitied; indignant at the present, careless of the future,—an object at once of apprehension and dislike. From this state of abjectness I was raised by a young woman of my own class. She was a neighbor; and whenever I took my solitary walk with my Wolfius in my pocket, she usually came to the door, and by a smile, or a short question, put in the friendliest manner, endeavored to solicit my attention. My heart had been long shut to kindness; but the sentiment was not dead within me;

* See in Moore's Lyrics the beautiful song, "I'd mourn the hopes that leave me." The concluding stanza is in point:

Far better hopes shall win me,
Along the path I've yet to roam,
The mind that burns within me,
And pure smile from thee *at home*

it revived at the first encouraging word; and the gratitude I felt for it, was the first pleasing sensation I had ventured to entertain for many dreary months."

There are two little effusions inserted in the notes to the Baviad and Mæviad, which have since been multiplied by copies, and have found their way into almost all collections of lyric poetry and "Elegant Extracts;" one of these was composed during the life of Anna; the other, written after her death, and beginning,

> I wish I were where Anna lies,
> For I am sick of lingering here,

is extremely striking from its unadorned simplicity and profound pathos.—Such was not the prevailing style of amatory verse at the time it was written, nearly fifty years ago. Mr. Gifford never married; and the effect of this early disappointment could be traced in his mind and constitution to the last moments of his life.

The same sad bereavement which tended to make Gifford a caustic critic and satirist, made Mr. Bowles a sentimental poet. The subject of his Sonnets was real; but he who has pointed out the difference between natural and fabricated feeling, should not have left a *blank* for the name of her he laments. He gives us indeed a formal permission to fill up the blank with any name we choose. But it is not the same thing; the name of the

woman who inspired a poet, is quite as important to posterity, as the name of the poet himself.

Who was the Hannah, whose fickleness occasioned that exquisite little poem which Montgomery has inscribed "To the memory of her who is dead to me?" It tells a tale of youthful love, of trusting affection, suddenly and eternally blighted,—and with such a brevity, such a simplicity, such a fervent yet heart-broken earnestness, that I fear it must be true!

At some future time, we shall, perhaps, be told who was the beautiful English girl, whose retiring charms won the heart of Hyppolito Pindemonte when he was here some years ago. His Canzone on her is, in Italy, considered as his masterpiece,* and even compared to some of Petrarch's. There are indeed few things in the compass of Italian poetry more sweet in expression, more true to feeling, than the lines in which Pindemonte, describing the blooming youth, the serene and quiet grace of this fair girl, disclaims the idea of even wishing to disturb the heavenly calm of her pure heart by a passion such as agitates his own.

> Il men di che può Donna esser cortese
> Ver chi l' ha di sè stesso assai più cara,
> Da te, vergine pura, io non vorrei.

This was being very peculiarly disinterested.—We may also learn, at some future time, who was

* See in the "Opere di Pindemonte," the Canzone, "O Giovanetta che la dubbia via."

the sweet Elvire, to whom Alphonse de Lamartine has promised immortality, and not promised more than he has the power to bestow. He is one of the few French poets, who have created a real and a strong interest out of their own country. He has vanquished, by the mere force of genius and sentiment, all the difficulties and deficiencies of the language in which he wrote, and has given to its limited poetical vocabulary a charm unknown before. He thus addresses Elvire in one of the *Méditations Poëtiques.*

Vois, d'un œil de pitié, la vulgaire jeunesse
Brillante de beauté, s'enivrant de plaisir;
Quand elle aura tari sa coupe enchanteresse,
Que restera-t-il d'elle? à peine un souvenir:
Le tombeau qui l'attend l'engloutit toute entière,
Un silence éternal succède à ses amours;
Mais les siècles auront passé sur ta poussière,
Elvire!—et tu vivras toujours!

* * * * *

Over some of the heroines of modern poetry, the tomb has recently closed; and the flowers scattered there could not be disturbed without awakening a pang in the bosoms of those who survive. They sleep, but only for a while: they shall rise again—the grave shall yield them up, "even in the loveliest looks they wore," for a poet's love has redeemed them from death and from oblivion! Methinks I see them even now with the prophetic eye of fancy, go floating over the ocean of time, in the light of their beauty and their fame, like Galatea and her nymphs triumphing upon the waters!

Others, perhaps, (the widow of Burns, and widow of Monti, for instance,) are declining into wintry age: sorrow and thought have quenched the native beauty on their cheek, and furrowed the once polished brow; yet crowned by poetry with eternal youth and unfading charms, they will go down to posterity among the Lauras, the Geraldines, the Sacharissas of other days;—Nature herself shall feel decrepitude,

> And, palsy-smitten, shake her starry brow,

ere these grow old and die!

And some, even now, move gracefully through the shades of domestic life, and the universe, of whose beauty they will ere long form a part, knows them not. Undistinguished among the ephemeral divinities around them, not looking as though they felt the future glory round their brow, nor swelling with anticipated fame, they yet carry in their mild eyes, that light of love, which has inspired undying strains.

> And Queens hereafter shall be proud to live
> Upon the alms of their superfluous praise!

THE END.

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